

Starting with the Spirit

Acts 2.1-21

At Pentecost, Jesus' disciples experience being filled dramatically with God's Holy Spirit, the culmination of many centuries of waiting for the fulfilment of God's promise, made known through Old Testament prophets.

This week's resources explore: experiencing God; how the Spirit inspires confidence.

 Look out for ways to connect faith with everyday life.

 Download a Planning Sheet to help prepare your session.

Pentecost

Lectionary Bible readings

RCL Pentecost Year C

Acts 2.1-21

Psalm 104.24-34,35b

Romans 8.14-17

John 14.8-17,(25-27)

Thy Kingdom Come

30 May – 9 June

Bible notes

- Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival, celebrated 50 days after Passover, and came to commemorate Moses receiving the Law from God. As Pentecost approaches, the disciples are feeling very uncertain, suspended between Jesus' death and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has promised to send an 'advocate' or 'helper' (John 14.26) and the disciples are nervously waiting. They lack confidence because they have lost their leader. Their senses are intensified and their expectations are high, but they don't know what to do. It is not a rational earthly experience that resolves their wait, but a heavenly one.

- Wind and fire are often used in the Old Testament as symbols of God's presence; they are like God's 'signature'. The Jewish scholar Philo (c.25 BC – AD 50) talks about God speaking in the fire at Mount Sinai, and Luke draws on this tradition in describing the disciples' vision as tongues of fire. Their experience of God is a powerful and transformative one.

- In the upper room, the breath of God starts something new. Often used as a sign of life, it breathes new life into the disciples and inspires them with confidence. They are transformed into linguists and bold preachers who are not afraid to share their faith. And as Jesus promised (John 14.27), they have a new sense of peace. How do we experience God? What does the Holy Spirit inspire us to do?

Prayers

 Welsh translations.

A gathering prayer

The disciples gathered together.
The Holy Spirit came
with tongues of fire.
People were amazed.
We gather here together.
Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Amaze us today. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Lord, your Spirit makes us feel:
as bold as lions; (*roar*)
as strong as tigers; (*growl*)
as safe as puppies; (*woof*)
and loved as children of God. (*hug yourself*)
Thank you, Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

A prayer for forgiveness

Mighty God, we often see things that we don't understand.
Sometimes we make fun of them,
and sometimes we are just plain afraid.
Forgive us, Lord,
for the times we do not trust in you.
May your Spirit make us bold,
as day by day,
we face each new challenge. **Amen.**

A prayer for others

Sit quietly and think about times you have felt afraid.

Lord Jesus,
we all feel frightened sometimes:
when we go to new places;
when we meet new people;
when unexpected things happen.
We pray for ourselves, for each other,
and for all who feel afraid.
Be with us, Lord,
and bless us with your loving presence.
Amen.

A sending out prayer

Lord God,
we have learned about some strange
and marvellous things that happened
when your Spirit came.
Send us out now,
full of love and confidence;
full of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Gather

Choose a quiet or active way to begin your session.

Waiting for the Spirit

Place either a wooden carving or a picture of praying hands  on a low table. Explain to the children that in today's story, the disciples are all together in one room, waiting for 'the helper' that Jesus promised to send them after he died. Encourage them to close their eyes, sit in silence and wait. After a suitable length of time, read the Bible story.

Come, Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, or God's Spirit, is often represented in the Bible as wind (like a whirlwind), fire or a dove. Devise actions for each symbol, then invite the children to walk around the space. When you call out a symbol, they do the appropriate action. Finish with the 'dove' action and get the children to 'land' in a circle around you.

Open the Word

Present the reading Open the Bible at Acts 2.1-21

The disciples are gathered in Jerusalem after Jesus has ascended to heaven. God's Holy Spirit comes down on them like a whirlwind and flames of fire and they go out confidently into the city, all speaking foreign languages.

Choose from these two ways of telling the story.

The Holy Spirit comes Encourage the children to keep their eyes closed (see *Waiting for the Spirit*). Start the story quietly and when the Holy Spirit comes, light a candle and invite them to open their eyes. Continue reading in a more animated manner, visibly expressing the emotions mentioned in the story. When Peter starts his speech, invite the children to stand up, and then deliver the speech in a dramatic way.

Interactive storytelling Sit in a circle and tell the story, encouraging the children to do actions for whirlwind and fire (see *Come, Holy Spirit*) at the appropriate points. They could also do facial expressions for key verbs (see bold text).

With the sound of a whirlwind it came, rushing into the house where the followers of Jesus were gathered. There was a commotion and flames as the Holy Spirit came, resting on each of the disciples like a tongue of fire.

As it whooshed into the room, the Spirit filled them all with foreign languages, and the disciples spoke in words they didn't understand.

Inspired, and with words gushing out of them, they went out into the streets.

It was the festival of Pentecost and Jerusalem was full of Jews from all over the world. When the disciples came out into the street, the crowds heard them speaking the message of Jesus in their own languages. They were **amazed**. 'How can this be?' they asked. 'All the followers of Jesus are from Galilee, but we can hear their message loud and clear in words we understand.'

Not everyone was impressed, though. Some listeners **sneered**, 'These people are drunk.' Peter, still filled to overflowing with the Spirit's power, stood up in front of all the people.

'We are not drunk,' he said. 'It's only nine in the morning. No, you are seeing and hearing what the prophet Joel spoke about in the Old Testament.'

Peter continued, 'Joel said, "God will pour his Spirit on all people; children will prophesy and adults will see holy visions. The Spirit is for everyone, men, women and children; there will be signs in heaven and on earth, and these will be the last days. Everyone who calls on the Lord's name shall be saved."'

Like a fiery whirlwind it came, and the Spirit **breathed** new life into the followers of Jesus.

Glossary

Pentecost a Jewish harvest festival.

Talk together

- How do you think the disciples felt when they saw flames on each other's heads and heard themselves speaking foreign languages?
- When did you last feel really excited about something?
- How could you help other people to experience God's Holy Spirit in their lives?

For very young children

Play and wonder about the power of the Holy Spirit.

Play materials: coloured ribbons to represent wind and flames.

Storytelling

Lay out a cloth and place items (in italics) to tell the story.

On the day of Pentecost, all Jesus' friends were waiting together. (*toy figures*) Suddenly, there was a sound like a mighty wind that filled the house. (*white ribbons*) Then, what looked like tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. (*card flames*)

Everyone there was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they all started speaking in different languages. (*sprinkle dove confetti*)

Outside, the people in the street were amazed, because they had all come from different countries, but everyone could understand the words in their own language. (*cards with different languages*) The people heard the disciples speaking of the wonderful things God has done. (*baby Jesus, cross, heart*)

Then Peter stepped forward and told them all the good news about Jesus.

Play

Help the children to flap a play parachute like the 'mighty wind', then hold it up and take it in turns to go under the 'flame'.

Create

Give all the children a flame card cut-out to decorate with glitter/sparkly stickers, then staple it onto a strip of card to make a headband to wear. Make wind streamers to wave by scrunching the ends of white and grey crepe streamers together and fastening with tape.

Praise

Invite the children to choose a flag/streamer to swirl like wind and flames to a Pentecost song (suggestions on [WEB](#)).

Pray

Switch on a bubble machine and let the children enjoy the bubbles swirling around them. Say together:

O Lord, send your Spirit down to us.
Help us to tell people about Jesus.
Help us to share your love. **Amen.**

[WEB](#) *Very young children page with more activities, prayers and songs.*

Explore & respond

Choose from these ideas to help the children make connections between the Bible reading and their lives. [WEB](#) Templates and links to online resources. Spiritual styles key: **W**ord, **E**motion, **S**ymbol, **A**ction. Find out more [WEB](#) in *Worship and learning support*.

Do

The Holy Spirit says...

10 mins **E**

Play a game that requires waiting patiently

You will need: space and leaders to observe.

- Invite the children to spread out around the space and lie comfortably on the floor.
- They must lie totally still until they hear the words, 'The Holy Spirit says...' plus an instruction, e.g. raise your right hand, sit up.
- Children are 'out' if they move before they hear, 'The Holy Spirit says...', or if they move when only an instruction is given.

Balloon release

10 mins **W E S**

Demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit

You will need: balloons of various shapes and colours, one or more balloon pumps.

The Holy Spirit has lots of energy and can be unpredictable – just like a balloon!

- Invite each child to choose a balloon and blow it up with the pump, then hold onto the end so it doesn't deflate. Younger children may need help.
- Get everyone to stand all together at one end/side of the room, pointing the ends of their balloons upwards into the air.
- On the count of three, everyone lets their balloon go and enjoys watching where it travels!

Make

Holy Spirit streamers

10 mins **E S**

A symbol of the fire of the Holy Spirit

You will need: red, yellow and orange ribbon cut into 40cm lengths, rainbow string/beading cord [WEB](#), cut into 50cm lengths.

- Invite each child to choose at least nine lengths of different coloured ribbon and hold all the ends together. Double back approx. 3cm of ribbon and wind some rainbow cord several times around this ribbon bunch before tying tightly to secure.
- Make a loop in the other end of the cord, large enough to slip over the child's wrist.
- Encourage the children to move around the space, waving their arms and making the Holy Spirit streamers 'dance' about and trail behind them.

Holy Spirit shakers

10 mins **E S**

Recreate the sound of the Holy Spirit

You will need: clean and empty plastic, or cardboard, containers with lids, e.g. vitamin tablet tubes, Pringle™ canisters, cocoa tins, uncooked rice or lentils, spoons, red, yellow and orange electrician's tape and scissors.

- Remind the children that the disciples experienced the Holy Spirit like a powerful wind. They are going to make musical instruments to recreate that sound.
- Give each child an empty container and invite them to fill it a quarter to a third full of rice or lentils and put the lid on. Seal the lid with tape, then use the tape to decorate the rest of the container.
- Have fun making wind noises with the finished instruments.

Pray

Blowing bubbles

5 mins **E S**

Invite the Holy Spirit to fall on us

You will need: bottles of bubble solution with bubble loops, one per child; a recording of Chris Tomlin's 'Spirit Fall' [WEB](#).

- Invite the children to sit in a circle with you on the floor. Give each child a bottle of bubble solution.
- Remind everyone how, in the story, the Holy Spirit appears like a mighty wind. Invite the children to blow into the loop with a big breath like a wind and make a big bubble. Then try blowing more softly.
- Play the song quietly and invite the children to listen and gently blow bubbles into the centre of the circle.
- Gently fade the music out and pray:
Loving Father,
let your Holy Spirit fall,
fall on us – like a mighty wind;
light the fire again.
Come and breathe your breath on us. **Amen.**

More prayers are on p.26.

Sing

[WEB](#) Abbreviations and music links* in *Hymns, songs & music*.

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|-----------|---|
| Under 5s | You've got to move when the Spirit says move (CHY, HON, RSJ)
Come, O Holy Spirit, come (STF, GTG, TS4, WGWG) |
| Under 12s | This is the day (verse 3) (MP, RSJ)
Let The Fire Fall, Christ Music Kids* |
| 12+ | Pour out, I will pour out my Spirit (WGWG)*
Church On Fire, Hillsong Worship* |

Songs from Out of the Ark for Churches

[WEB](#) Thank you God

See www.rootsontheweb.com

Children's Sheet and **Colouring Sheet** (Welsh versions available).

Send out

Live your faith

Encourage the children to put their faith into action. Use the idea below or give out the **Children's Sheet** [WEB](#).

Take your shaker or streamers home, and tell your family or friends why you made them and what they represent. **W**

ROOTS YOUNG PEOPLE

Go to www.rootsontheweb.com for all templates, links and images. Find Bible notes and more prayers on p.26. Use the BIBLE section below first, then choose activities from the other sections. Extra ideas can be found in *Explore & respond* opposite.

BIBLE Acts 2.1-21

Warm up 5 mins E

Choose a volunteer and ask them to fall backwards, having instructed three different people to catch them. Who did they trust the most? To 'fall', you need to have confidence that your partner will catch you. What helps our confidence to increase?

Picture this 10 mins W E

Invite two people to sketch the scene on a flip chart or large sheet of paper while someone slowly reads **Acts 2.1-21**. Compare the pictures. What different features have been picked out? Does it matter what it looks like? What is more important?

Questions to discuss

- How were the disciples feeling at the start?
- How did the arrival of the Holy Spirit change things?
- When have you noticed the Holy Spirit inspire confidence in someone?

EXPLORE

Pentecost vlog 15 mins+ E

Invite the young people to produce a video blog about the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts. They all pretend to be someone in the story, e.g. Peter, another disciple, a member of the crowd. Record interviews with people about the events they witnessed on a mobile phone, and have fun watching it, before deleting.

Sensory stations 15 mins E S

Create stations for each of the five senses. Lay out on separate tables: incense to smell, a holding cross to feel, bread and red grape juice to taste, a song on a phone/iPod, e.g. 'Who You Say I Am' by Hillsong Worship (see *Listen*) and headphones to listen, a painting (see image below) to look at. Invite the young people to spend a few minutes at each station. Which one helped them to feel closer to God?

Picture pointers WEB

Questions for reflection 🌐

- ▶ What do you think this person is experiencing?
- ▶ When have you 'abandoned' yourself totally to God?
- ▶ What were/are the practical consequences of doing so?



CONNECT 🌐

Experiencing God 15 mins W

It is impossible to put into words exactly what God is, but accounts of people who have had near-death experiences contain similar descriptions of God as life, light and love. Select some quotations WEB to start a discussion about how people experience God.

Ignite! 10 mins W A

Put kindling, twists of newspaper and firelighters on the floor. Ask the young people what's missing. Matches! The Holy Spirit is like a spark that ignites us. Discuss what new adventures the Holy Spirit might give us the courage and energy to embark on.

WEB PostScript: Linking this week's reading to the news 🌐

PRAY

Waiting on God 5 mins E S

Burn some incense and play a reflective song, e.g. Chris Tomlin's 'Spirit Fall' (see *Listen*). Encourage the young people to be still, listen and wait for the Holy Spirit. Alternatively, they could use play dough to mould and meditate with.

Prayer triplets 10 mins S

Divide the group into threes and invite the young people to share with each other what it is they lack confidence in. Encourage them to pray for each person in turn, asking that the Holy Spirit gives them the confidence they need.

Listen

WEB See *Young People* page or *Hymns, songs & music* for links to these tracks.

Spirit Fall, Chris Tomlin on *Passion: Here For You*
Sinking Deep, Hillsong Young & Free on *This Is Living*
Who You Say I Am, Hillsong Worship on *There Is More*

Live your faith

Through your words or actions, help someone else to grow in confidence this week. **E A**