

Acts 2:1–21
Ps. 104:24–34, 35b
1 Cor. 12:3b–13
John 20:19–23

The Day of Pentecost

Goal for the Session

Third- and fourth-graders will witness the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and explore the diversity of God's people called to live in community.

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Acts 2:1–21

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Stephen A. Cooper

In this lection the group of disciples—restored now to the full twelve—behold a vision, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and speak in foreign tongues (2:1–5). Reactions from inhabitants of Jerusalem follow (vv. 6–13); then Peter addresses the marveling if divided crowd (vv. 14–21). Peter’s oration interprets the happening, cites relevant Scripture, and draws the conclusion: the events around Jesus Christ followed by this bestowal of the Spirit prove that the last days whereof the prophets spoke have come. The speech continues beyond the lection and culminates with a call to repentance and baptism (2:38); three thousand heed the call and form a community to communicate the fullness of what they have received.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by David P. Gushee

The early church, at least in large part, seems to have been remarkably open to a dynamic and fluid way of operating, based on its theology and experience of the Holy Spirit. Where to go, what to do, how to worship, who should speak in worship, what should be said in worship, who should lead the community, how the community should be led, how to relate to outsiders, who should relate to outsiders, what to say when under threat—these and many other matters seem to have been handled through reliance on the empowerment and direction of the Holy Spirit.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by David M. Bender

This narrative challenges our congregants to find the Spirit within them and to locate, claim, and utilize their authentic voices, gifts, and skills with which to love and serve. However, we cheapen the Spirit and her gifts if we reduce them to dwelling exclusively within the individual. This Spirit that swept through the house gifted more than those disciples at Pentecost and the disciples with whom we minister today. That Spirit has been loosed into the world, and its creative and life-giving power is now the gift of families and communities, of churches, and of nations. The relevant question becomes not just “How will *I* respond to these party gifts of the Spirit?” but “How will *we* respond to these gifts?”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Jana Childers

Apart from this text, there is little evidence of the Holy Spirit working in any “violent” fashion. Many Christians have become accustomed to thinking of the Holy Spirit as more of a Hawaiian breeze than a Chicago gale. However, this important passage may at least remind contemporary congregations that the Spirit does not always arrive as a still, small voice or a faint stirring in the heart. The Holy Spirit’s power is not always subtle, fragile, or polite. Even today it can be electric, atomic, and volcanic.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1–21

Focus on Your Teaching

Children know firsthand what it is like to be singled out or left out. They also are growing in understanding the dynamics of living with others in community. This will help them to appreciate how God sends the unifying gift of the Spirit to Jesus' followers and how they are able to trust God's ability to work through them as they live in unity with others. As you teach, look for opportunities to celebrate the differences within your group, as well as God's desire to unite you and them in love for Christ.

Wondrous God, put your Spirit to work through me as I teach. Help me to show that there is no bias in your love for each person. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- red cloth
- battery-powered candle
- study Bible
- Color Pack 25, 26, 32
- red paper
- scissors
- masking tape
- copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- Singing the Feast, 2019–2020*, CD player

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 31; *Singing the Feast, 2019–2020*, CD player; red streamer or ribbon; scissors
- option 2: Color Pack 25, Bible, construction paper, crayons, tempera paint, water, spoons, drinking straws, newspapers
- option 3: clear self-adhesive plastic; red, orange, yellow tissue paper; scissors; permanent markers

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, review what your church teaches about the Spirit. Locate a map of Palestine in the time of Jesus in a study Bible. Prepare two-sided copies using Resource Sheets 1 and 2 (The Day of Pentecost), one per child. Cut a 3" flame shape from red paper for each child, and attach a loop of masking tape to the back of it. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut two 36" pieces of red streamer or ribbon for each child. If you are using option 3, cut 8" x 8" pieces of clear self-adhesive plastic, two per child. Cut red, orange, and yellow tissue paper into approximately 1" squares, about fifty per child.

Greet learners by name as they arrive and ask them to arrange a red cloth in the center of your learning space and place the Christ candle on it. Gather around the candle and light it as a reminder of Jesus' presence with the group. Explain that this is the day the church celebrates how God sends the Spirit to Jesus' followers. Pray aloud:

Fill us with your Spirit, God, and fill our hearts with the desire to be Jesus' followers. Amen.

Display Color Pack 25. Invite learners to point to words they recognize. Ask them to imagine a group of ten-year-old children who speak these different languages. Discuss:

❖ How might these children be like you? How might they be different?

Explain that today's Bible story is about a time when people who spoke different languages were gathered in one place.

EXPLORING

Open your Bible to Acts 2, and say that this is where today's Bible story is located. Recall how Acts tells the story of Jesus' first followers as they spread the good news and started churches. To set the scene, read aloud Acts 1:3–5 and Acts 1:12–14. Show the map of Palestine in Jesus' time ask a volunteer to locate Jerusalem.

Explain that learners will work together to act out this story. Distribute copies of Resource Sheets 1 and 2 (The Day of Pentecost.) Ask for volunteers to read the character parts. (For a small group, combine the Disciple parts. For a large group, have pairs read a Disciple part in unison.) Plan to place the prepared flame shapes and show Color Pack 26 as directed in the script. Perform the play together.

Focus on what unites Christians. For example: believing Jesus is God's Son, worshiping God, following Jesus' teachings, baptizing, participating in communion, serving others in Jesus' name. Christians around the world may sing different songs in worship or use different words to talk about faith, but all follow Jesus.

Afterward, discuss the Bible story:

- ﴿ What did Jesus tell the disciples to do after he went to heaven to live with God?
- ﴿ Why were there people from so many countries gathered in Jerusalem on that day?
- ﴿ What did the disciples hear and see when the Spirit came upon them?
- ﴿ What was unusual about the disciples' speech?
- ﴿ Why do you think God sent the Spirit in this way?
- ﴿ If you had been one of the disciples on that day, how would you have reacted to the coming of the Spirit? If you had been a member of the crowd, how would you have reacted?

Tell learners about a few Christians you know who live in other cities or worship at other churches. Give thanks that the Spirit holds them together with you as the body of Christ. Invite learners to name other Christians they know. Discuss:

- ﴿ In what ways are Christians like one big family?
- ﴿ In your opinion, what is the good news about God's gift of the Spirit?

**EASY
PREP**

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Dance in the Spirit** Learners will use movement and music to celebrate the presence of the Spirit. Recall how excited the disciples were when the Spirit came to them at Pentecost. Invite learners to stand in a circle and spread out. Give each learner two 36" red streamers or ribbons and ask them to try making loops, spirals, waves, and other motions. Encourage them to try different motions as you play "Sanna, Sannanina" (Color Pack 31, track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020). Admire the variety of ways that learners interpret the music, and then work together to create one set of motions to accompany the song. Sing it together with these motions to celebrate how the Spirit gathers Jesus' followers into one family.

For best results, the tempera paint needs to be quite thin. Experiment on a piece of scrap paper and add water as needed so that it is easy to blow the paint into thin lines with a straw.

Wherever I May Wander

Wherever I may wander,
 Wherever I may be,
 I'm certain of God's loving
 care;
 God's care is over me.

God made the great high
 mountains,
 And made this wide blue
 sea;
 God made the sky where
 eagles fly;
 God made this world and
 me.

Throughout this whole
 creation
 I've seen a loving care
 For everyone in every land,
 God's children everywhere.

Wherever I may wander,
 Wherever I may be,
 I'm certain of God's loving
 care;
 God's care is over me.
 I'm certain of God's loving
 care;
 God's care is over me,
 God's care is over me.

2. God's Love Learners will consider the diversity among God's children as they make a poster. Show Color Pack 25 and read aloud John 13:34–35. Invite learners to wonder about the meaning of this Bible verse for the diverse followers of Jesus around the world. Work together to summarize this discussion in one short, catchy phrase. Distribute construction paper and crayons and have learners write this phrase in the center, being sure to press firmly. Have them choose a few words from the poster to write around the phrase. Cover the work area with newspapers. Demonstrate how to put a few large drops of paint near the corners of the paper and then use a straw to blow lines of paint across the page. (Learners may use different colors or all one color.) As posters are drying, ask: How might blowing on these straws remind us of Pentecost? Display completed posters where others in the church can enjoy them.

3. Spirit Sun Catcher Learners will make reminders of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Invite learners to discuss their ideas about why the church celebrates Pentecost each year. Give an 8" x 8" piece of clear self-adhesive plastic to each learner. Have them carefully peel off the backing, leaving the sticky side up. Set out the 1" tissue paper squares. Have learners place squares on the sticky plastic, arranging them and overlapping them as desired. Help each one to place a second piece of clear plastic on top of the tissue paper, sticky side down. Invite learners to use permanent markers to write "God's Spirit Is Love" on the plastic and make a border of flame shapes or hearts around it. Comment on the unique creations, and how the Spirit fills each of Jesus' unique followers. Invite learners to tell their families about Pentecost and tape their sun catchers to a window at home.

CLOSING

Invite learners to sing "Wherever I May Wander" (Color Pack 32, track 23 on *Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020) as the group gathers around the candle. Ask:

- ❖ How are people in our church like the people who gathered long ago in Jerusalem on Pentecost?
- ❖ How are they like you?

Affirm how the Spirit works to unite God's children around the world. Pray aloud, inviting learners to name some of God's children when you pause (for example: Sarah, children in Nepal, children who are refugees, my cousin):

Wondrous God, thank for the gift of your Spirit and the gift of love you have given to each one of us to share. Hear our prayers for your children around the world. (Pause for learners to add names.) Protect each one, and guide us to live together in peace. Amen.

The Day of Pentecost, Page 1 (based on Acts 2:1–21)

Characters: Peter, Disciple 1, Disciple 2, Disciple 3, Man, Woman, Narrator

Narrator: Long ago, the Jewish people celebrated a harvest festival called Pentecost. People came to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost every year.

Peter: My name is Peter. I'm one of Jesus' disciples, and I want to tell you about the day of Pentecost that took place after God raised Jesus from death. Fifty days after Easter, Jesus' followers were in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

Disciple 1: Easter was the day that God raised Jesus from death and we found that the tomb where Jesus' body was buried was empty. We were so happy that Jesus was alive!

Disciple 2: But then ten days before Pentecost, Jesus went back to heaven to live with God forever. We were feeling sad that Jesus wasn't with us anymore.

Disciple 3: But Jesus also promised us something really good . . .

Peter: That's right. Jesus promised us that the Spirit would come and dwell in our hearts and give us the power to do special work for God. Jesus told us to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come.

Disciple 1: There were 120 followers of Jesus in Jerusalem on that Pentecost day. We decided to meet together in one house.

Peter: Suddenly, there was a very noisy and powerful sound of wind. It filled the house!

Disciple 2: I've never heard wind like that indoors. It was amazing!

Disciple 3: Something else happened too. We looked around and saw that each one of us had a little flame, like a tongue, above our heads.



(Stick a red flame shape on each actor's forehead.)

The Day of Pentecost, Page 2
(based on Acts 2:1–21)



Disciple 1: That's right. The flames were resting on us, but we weren't being burned!

Disciple 2: We also started speaking in languages we didn't even know. We were telling all about Jesus and God's love!

Disciple 3: The people who were outside came running to listen to us.

Man: I was one of those people. I could hardly believe what I was seeing and hearing. I come from Egypt, but these believers from Galilee could speak my language, and many others too.

(Show Color Pack 26 with the disciples saying, “Peace” in many languages.)

Woman: You know what I thought? I thought they were drunk!

Peter: A lot of people thought that, but it wasn't true. The Spirit had come to Jesus' followers that day and given us the power to speak to all the people gathered in Jerusalem.

Woman: Tell them what else you did, Peter.

Peter: I told the people what the prophet Joel wrote about. He told us that the Spirit would come to God's people and give us the power to do God's work.

Disciple 1: You also told them all about Jesus, about all the wonderful healings Jesus did, and the way he showed God's love.

Peter: It was a great day. We baptized 3,000 people that day, and that was the beginning of Jesus' church, the Christian church.

Disciple 2: Jesus had promised that the Spirit would be with us, and it's true!

Peter: That's right. The Spirit is still working in God's people, today.

Narrator: So that's what happened almost 2,000 years ago. The Spirit is still with us today. When we believe in Jesus, God places the power of the Spirit in us too.