

Background Notes for Parents

About the Theme

Pentecost

In this theme the children learn about the gift of the Holy Spirit and serving as a way of life.

Easter Sunday is the beginning of the **Easter Season** which lasts for 50 days. The celebration of the **Ascension** and **Pentecost** completes the Easter story.

Ascension

Forty days after Easter, the Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection and told them that he was going back to his Father in heaven. Before Jesus leaves them, he gives his followers a mission. Jesus tells his disciples to be his witnesses. They are to "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to everyone." (Mark 16:15, 16)

The disciples cannot carry out their mission of spreading Jesus' message to the ends of the earth without help. Therefore, Jesus tells his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they receive power from God. This power is God's Holy Spirit, who Jesus says will come after he goes away. After Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

Pentecost

Pentecost (or 'Shavuot' as it is called in Hebrew) is a Greek word meaning 'fiftieth'. The Jewish 'feast of weeks' was held fifty days after the beginning of the grain harvest. It was a thanksgiving feast, celebrating the end of the harvest and commemorating the day God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jesus had told his disciples that it was important that they carry on his mission after he was gone. He promised he would give them the strength of his Spirit to do this. At Pentecost the Church celebrates Jesus fulfilling that promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide and help his disciples to understand all that he has taught them. It is celebrated 50 days (7 weeks) after Easter Sunday and brings the Easter season to an end.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost changed the frightened disciples into witnesses who could speak out with courage. The Holy Spirit strengthens the Church today in its mission to continue the work of Jesus and proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Christians are called each day to accept and live lives of joyful service through the power of the Spirit in their lives.

Christians believe that the Spirit of God is active in each person and, in a special way, in the community of believers, which is the Church. It is the work of the Spirit to help people to hear God's message and to live Jesus' way of service. The Feast of Pentecost is the celebration both of the gift of God's Holy Spirit and the trust God places in people to be witnesses in the world. It is sometimes called ***the birthday of the Church*** because, filled with courage given by the Holy Spirit, the disciples went out among the people and began spreading Jesus' message, thus marking the beginning of the Church.

Year 4

In the topic 'New Life' the children explore how some good news can give us 'new life'. They hear the description in Acts 2 of how, after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter tells everyone about the resurrection of Jesus. They will learn that the power of the Holy Spirit is for all Christians and all are called to share the Gospel message. The Good News of Jesus is for the whole world. The event is celebrated in Christian churches on the Feast of Pentecost. They will learn about the conversion of Paul and how he spent his life spreading the Good News of the new life that Jesus brings.

Week 1: Talk to your child about the experience of feeling a bit miserable or just slightly bored and then something happens to brighten your day and make you feel alive. What happened? Who was responsible and why did it make a difference? How did your good feeling affect others? Direct children to the given template to complete.

Week 2: Share the story of Pentecost with your child

'The Coming of the Holy Spirit'

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking like this are Galileans! How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia; from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!"

Peter addresses the crowd

(Notice how Peter tells everyone about Jesus' Resurrection.)

Then Peter stood up with the other apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. This is what the prophet Joel spoke about: 'Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message.'

Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. In accordance with his own plan, God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to be crucified. But God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact. All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!"

When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do, brothers?" Peter said to them, "Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Many of them believed his message and were baptised, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day. They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.'

(Based on the Acts of the Apostles)

The task is for your child to draw their interpretation of the scene (many images can be found on the internet) Encourage them to use the Scripture to get as much detail into their picture as possible. They might want to use speech bubbles.

Week 3: Share this scripture story with your child

Paul was originally called Saul. He was a Jew who came from Tarsus. He grew up in a Jewish home. He was a Pharisee and did everything he could to be a good man. He kept every rule there was to keep, but he did not like the followers of Jesus. He did his best to wipe them out; however, God filled his mind and heart with the light of truth, and he recognised who Jesus was. He knew he owed everything to God's love. All he wanted to do was spread the Good News of that love all over the world. When he became a Christian his name was changed to Paul.

He travelled many thousands of miles, on foot, on horseback and by boat to spread the Good News, mainly to the Gentiles, the people who were not Jews. In every place, he told people about Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. He explained the Good News that Jesus had come to bring – God loves everyone. He told them how Jesus had died and been raised to a new life by his Father in heaven and how the Holy Spirit helps people. He told them that Jesus wanted them to share this new life. When they asked him what they had to do to live this new life, he told them that they must believe and be baptised and try to live like Jesus, loving God and loving one another. They were to share their faith with one another, pray together and break bread together as Jesus had done with his friends at the Last Supper.

Help your child to create a character sketch of Paul before he became a follower of Jesus. Write a second character sketch of Paul after he became a follower of Jesus. How did he change and why? There is a template they can use to help them with this.

Week 4: Celebrate the story of Pentecost – what can you remember about the story? What message does it have for Christians today?

Mission Together and CAFOD have Pentecost liturgies you can download and celebrate.

<https://missiontogether.org.uk/pentecost/>

<https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Pentecost-primary-resources>