



Pentecost

Goal: To celebrate the life-giving movement of the Holy Spirit in the world.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 2:1-4, 38-39

Pentecost is the dramatic story of the coming of the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers in Jerusalem. There was the sound of a "fierce wind" and what seemed to be "flames of fire" alighting on the disciples. The Spirit was poured out on people "from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem." They heard others speaking "in their native languages," declaring "the mighty works of God" (v. 11, CEB).

Peter preached and talked about the pouring out of God's Spirit, predicted by the prophet Joel (vv. 16-23; see Joel 2:28-32). Peter proclaimed Jesus was crucified, but was raised up in his resurrection and exalted "at God's right side" (Acts 2:33, CEB). This was Peter's message, and it became the central message of the church. Peter urged the crowd to "change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v. 38, CEB).

We celebrate the life-giving Spirit of God who is with the church now and forever. We are never alone. God's Spirit is always with us. God's grace gives us the Spirit and, in gratitude, we celebrate by serving God and others!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

It was a big celebration, this day of Pentecost when God's Spirit was seen and experienced by the early church gathered together. Just as the people gathered to celebrate, so too your church will mark this day of Pentecost in special ways during worship. Think about the big themes in this story—God's Spirit present in wind; God's Spirit present with all the different kinds of people—and how children will connect with them. Find out what will happen in worship and help prepare the children to be participants. Help them name the ways God's Spirit is alive and well, working in their lives today.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Think about your children as you prepare to share this story of Pentecost, what we have also called "the birthday of the church." The story is rich in imagery, and you can help them connect by inviting their stories of the experience of feeling and watching the wind, or what it's like to hear people speaking in other languages. There may be children in your group who are learning other languages or children for whom English is a second language. Hearing them speak is a great way for the entire group to connect with this story about all the different people gathered in one place when God's Spirit was felt among them.

Holy Spirit, set me on fire for the gospel. Help me speak the truth in love and peace amid injustice. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 12, 12a, 12b,
15, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

red cloth

red, orange, and yellow
crepe paper streamers

oscillating electric fan

Responding

Claiming

internet-connected
device with Google
Translate

Praying

magazines with pictures
of a variety of people
(cultures, backgrounds,
genders, ages)

Extra

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG** **A**

Play “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”—**MM 22**—as the children arrive. Welcome each child by saying, “May the Holy Spirit be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set up the worship space. On a table, provide a red cloth (the liturgical [church] color for Pentecost), a Bible, a candle, and **SCM 12a** and **SCM 12b**.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two children prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a couple of volunteers to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

Ask the children to decorate the worship area for Pentecost. Provide red, orange, and yellow crepe paper streamers. Have the children make a mural that reads, “Welcome to all from every part of the world!” As preparation continues, discuss:

- ▼ When were you in a situation where you did not understand the language being spoken? How did you feel?
- ▼ When have you been so excited that you stumbled over words trying to say something? What did you do?

Singing

Gather and sing “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)”—**MM 4**; **SCM 15**. Encourage the children to add movements. Tell the children the second version of the song is from Ghana, Africa, in the original language: Twi.

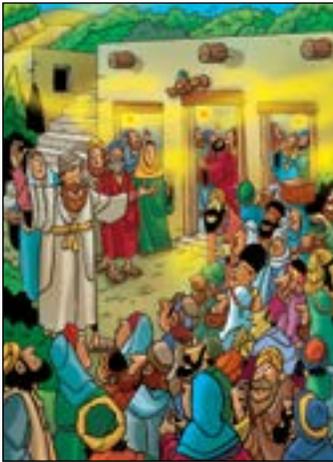
Praying **TD**

Turn on the candle and the electric fan. Ask the children how an experience of God might be like the wind. After they have responded, invite them to breathe deeply and think about how the air entering their lungs is like the Spirit. Then pray:

God, you come to us in unexpected ways, like a sudden wind that surprises us, twirling, diving, and rising again. Help us to keep our eyes and our hearts open for the movement of your Spirit all around us. Amen.



If the children have questions about the Holy Spirit and how believers today receive the Spirit, consult with your pastor or church educator.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Preparing to Hear the Story

In front of the fan and the candle, ask the children to close their eyes and listen. Remind them that, after Jesus was resurrected and spent some time with his disciples, he ascended into heaven. Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would come and be with them. Keeping their eyes closed, invite the children to imagine what the disciples might have thought the Holy Spirit would look, sound, and feel like.

Hearing the Story

LG L

Ask a volunteer to open a Bible to Acts 2. Suggest that the children pretend they are the disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit. Invite them to pay attention to the way things sound, look, and feel in their imaginations as you read. Invite volunteers to read Acts 2:1–4, 38–39. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to respond by saying, “Thanks be to God.” Place the Bible on the worship table.

Encourage the children to hold their hands to their ears to pantomime listening and to their mouths for speaking as you read the story again using **SCM 12** or listen to the story audio. If reading, express the emotions with your voice, facial expressions, and gestures. Turn off the fan.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C B TD

Sit in a circle. Hold the loose end of a ball of yarn and say, “I am (*Name*). God's Spirit has been given to me.”

Toss the ball of yarn across the circle to another member of the group, but don't let go of the end.

Ask this child to repeat the words, inserting his or her own name, and then hold the yarn with one hand and toss the ball to another child. Continue in this way until everyone is connected.

Carefully lay the yarn web on the floor in the center of the circle, commenting on how it symbolizes the way the Spirit weaves individuals together into one community of God's people. Discuss:

- ▼ How did the Holy Spirit bring the disciples and the other people in Jerusalem together?
- ▼ How does the Spirit bring people in our church together?

TD *For some children who have tactile sensitivities, stimulations such as yarn, sand, cotton balls, and felt may be a trigger. Extreme reactions that may be interpreted as bad behaviors may result. If the activity seems to be overwhelming or difficult for a child, allow him or her to walk away from the activity.*



Singing

Sing “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”— **MM 22; SCM 25**. Add this stanza to celebrate God’s gift of the Holy Spirit to the church.

I’ve got the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
down in my heart (*Where?*),
down in my heart (*Where?*),
down in my heart.
I’ve got the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
down in my heart (*Where?*),
down in my heart to stay.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



Claiming God’s Grace

Before the session, download the Google Translate app to a tablet or smartphone or access the program on an internet-connected device with a speaker.

Remind the children that the Holy Spirit empowered people from all over the world to hear about God’s love in their own languages.

Explore the languages of Pentecost, using Google Translate. Type the phrase “God loves everyone!” into Google Translate and invite the children to choose language options. Listen to the translation (if provided) and try to echo these important words in other languages.

Using Google Translate, choose a language (suggestions: Swahili, French, Spanish). Look up some of the key words of the story, such as *Spirit, wind, fire, different, good news, baptize, and God*. Ask a volunteer to list these words in English and in the other language.

Read today’s story from **SCM 12**, having the children call out key words in the new language at the appropriate parts in the story.

Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “God loves everyone,” in the chosen language.



Celebrating God's Grace



To celebrate the life-giving movement of the Holy Spirit, invite the children to make pictures by blowing paint on paper. Give each child a sheet of paper, a straw, and a paint smock.

Place dime-sized drops of red, orange, and yellow paint, to represent fire, along one side of the paper and blue, gray, and white, to represent wind, along the opposite side. Invite the children to blow the paint on each side of the paper across the page using the straw.

Set aside the papers for a few moments to dry, and engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What happened when you blew the paint?
- Did it do exactly what you expected?
- How might the Holy Spirit be moving in your life in unexpected ways?

Encourage the children to look at their paintings. Ask them what forms they may see (like looking at clouds in the sky). Ask them in what ways they see the Holy Spirit helping them in their lives. They may not be able to identify anything right now, but they may begin to see ways as they pay attention to the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Praying God's Grace



Explain that one of the exciting things about the Pentecost story is that the Spirit touched people from all over the world. Talk together about the many wonderful differences that people bring to your congregation. Provide some examples, such as the older person who always brings the bread for communion, the woman in a wheelchair who leads the choir, the newcomer from Southeast Asia who volunteers in the nursery, and so on.

Have the children use the mural created for the worship center. Ask them to cut out magazine pictures of people from different cultures, backgrounds, genders, and ages. Have them glue the pictures to the mural.

As the children work, wonder together about other diverse communities the children belong to (for instance: school, a soccer team, a music group, and so forth). Ask the children what kinds of things they think we can learn from people whose backgrounds are different from our own.

Hang the mural at a well-traveled location in your church building.

Gather by the mural and say a prayer of thanksgiving for all God's people and how God blesses us through the gifts of one another.



Extra Activity



Wonder together about the following:

- I wonder, “Where do you see the Holy Spirit working in your family?”
- I wonder, “Where do you see the Holy Spirit working in the place you live? In your church?”
- I wonder, “Where do you see the Holy Spirit working in the world?”

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Help the children read the phrases on the journal page with you. Allow time for children to write or draw their responses to the prompts. When the children have had the opportunity to complete the activity, encourage those who wish to share their ideas with the group.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather together and pray the following, emphasizing the bolded words:

Holy Spirit, you come to us in **wind**. Fill us with life and help us to follow you.

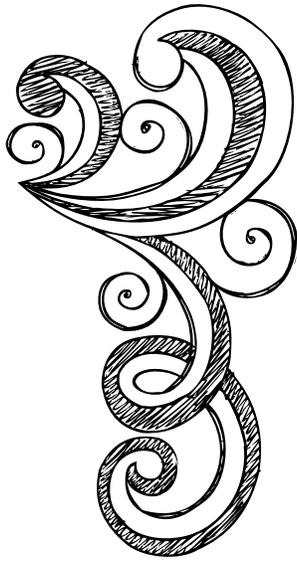
Holy Spirit, you come to us in **flame**. Help us feel the warmth of your life in our hearts. Inspire us to follow you.

Amazing God, we thank you for coming to us in **wind** and **flame** to show us your love and grace. Amen.

As the children leave, say to each child, “(Name), share God’s love with everyone you meet!”



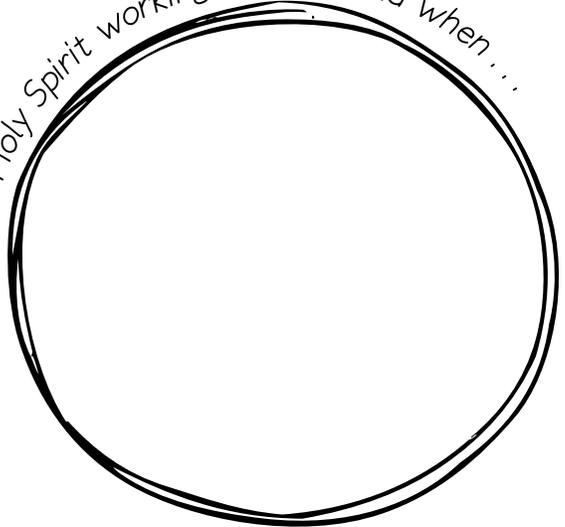
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



God's Spirit is always with us.

The Holy Spirit is working in me when ...

I see the Holy Spirit working in the world when ...



I see the Holy Spirit working in my family when ...

I see the Holy Spirit working where I live when ...



