



The Spirit Unleashed

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

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 2:1-13

In the Old Testament, Pentecost is an important festival celebrated fifty days after Passover. Also called Shavuot, it was a time of giving thanks for the spring harvest. The church observes Pentecost, sometimes called “the birthday of the church,” as a celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be with us always. The Spirit is unleashed on the church to be God’s presence with us in every time and circumstance. The ongoing presence of the Spirit assures the church, and us, of being led into God’s will and work.

The events of Pentecost—sound of a fierce wind, flames of fire, speaking in other languages—are extraordinary and strange to us. Dramatically, they indicate the special nature of this experience. The Spirit is the church’s constant and permanent companion.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all who follow Christ. The Spirit comes by God’s grace, and we are grateful we are not left to face life on our own. The Spirit empowers the church to share the message of Jesus Christ, live in ways Christ commands, and be the people Christ intends us to be. In ways both great and small, the Spirit is active. As the good news of Jesus is communicated to all people, we see the Spirit at work.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children know about superpowers from cartoon stories. Imagining what superpower you would choose is a fun game to play with them. The story of Pentecost and God’s gift of the Spirit might seem a bit tame to them in light of the culture in which they live, where being powerful and strong is a high value.

The Pentecost story invites children to see power in new ways—the power to live with those who are different from us, who speak other languages, and who eat different kinds of food; the power to love as Jesus loved; and the power to do good in this world, in Jesus’ name.

Is the Pentecost story familiar to your children, or will it be new to them? Is there a variety of cultures and languages present within your group or community? If so, how do the children interact across these differences? If not, how will you help the children experience the miracle that takes places in verse 4?

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Have you ever taken a dog off a leash and let it run free? It’s beautiful to watch that sense of joy, freedom, and agency. That same spirit is what the followers experienced at Pentecost. You are called to tend and nurture that same Spirit in the children you are leading.

Children are full of natural energy and approach the world with both curiosity and confidence. Notice their language, the things they say. Help them name their actions in the world, actions that allow the Spirit of God’s amazing love to be present and active.

*Holy Spirit, give me Pentecost joy so I may
share your joy with my children. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 14, 27, 29

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

red, orange, yellow
streamers

candle

red cloth

Responding

Claiming

red construction paper;
red, orange, and yellow
crepe paper streamers;
electric fan (optional)

Celebrating

unfrosted cupcakes,
plastic straws, mini
chocolate chips, frosting
or whipped topping,
red sprinkles, candles,
matches (optional)

Extra

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

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the 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.

Wear something red today.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Celebrating God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

Use “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)” as background music.

Greet the children by name. Tell them how glad you are to see them. Notice the children wearing red, noting that Christians often wear red on this day called Pentecost.

Invite the children to help you decorate the room for Pentecost—the birthday of the church and Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit to us. Tape red, orange, and yellow streamers to the top of doorframes and around the room. Explain that red is the church color for Pentecost.

Ask the children to include a Bible and a red cloth. Place a candle on the table. Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups, squeezing hands together, and stretching.*

Singing **L**

Sing “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase).”

This song is available in English and Twi, so encourage your children to sing in both languages. Remark how all over the world, no matter the language, people praise God. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 29** so the children can sing along.

Praying

Turn on the candle, reminding the children that fire is a sign of the Holy Spirit. Ask the group to join in an echo prayer:

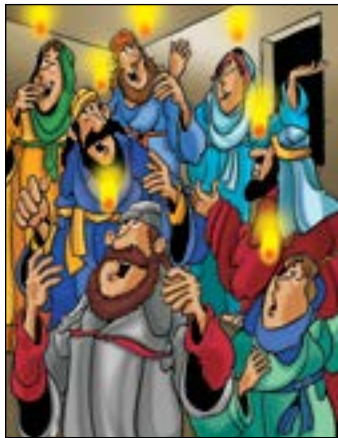
Dear God, /
Fill us with your Spirit. /
Amen. /



Preparing to Hear the Story

Comment that we call today Pentecost, meaning “the fiftieth day.” *Pente* means “five” in Greek. Note that the story for today takes place fifty days after Easter, the day Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to some of his followers.

Ask the children why Jesus instructed his followers to wait in Jerusalem (*to receive God’s promise of the Holy Spirit [Acts 1:4]*). Explain that Christians celebrate Pentecost to remember how God sends the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ followers. The Spirit gives us the power and energy to build the church and do God’s work.



Hearing the Story

M B L D

Invite a child to open the Bible to Acts 2. Have one or two volunteers read Acts 2:1–13. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the Bible on the worship table.

Invite children to take part in the story by making sounds of the wind, crackling flames, and everyone talking at the same time as you read or listen to an adaptation of the story from **SCM 14** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, your expressions, your own feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

D *Make sure you are facing children who are hearing impaired. Get in the habit of catching their attention visually before speaking.*

Reflecting on God’s Grace

MS

Write on newsprint as you read each word aloud: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). Ask a volunteer to point to each word as the group reads the verse. Then have the children stand up and add these motions:

All of them (*stretch arms out to sides*)
Were filled (*bring arms in, placing hands together and moving them up toward face*)
With the Holy Spirit (*dance fingers over top of head*)

Repeat the verse several times. Wonder what difference the Spirit makes in our lives and in our world.

Singing

L

Sing “We Are Dancing in the Love of God (Danzaremos en amor de Dios)”—**SCM 27**—to celebrate how the spirit moves us. This traditional Zulu song is sung in English and Xhosa. Dance to the song. Celebrate with joy!

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, cut red construction paper into 7" x 10" rectangles. Cut crepe paper streamers into 18" lengths. Cut yarn into 15"-18" lengths.

Invite the children to make wind socks to remind them of the movement of the Spirit as wind. Use the following directions to make the wind socks:

- ▼ Roll the red rectangle into a cylinder and staple together at each end.
- ▼ To make streamers, staple four or five strips of crepe paper to one end of the cylinder.
- ▼ Punch two holes on the other end of the wind sock across from each other. Tie one end of a piece of yarn through each hole to form a hanger.

Invite the children to take their wind socks outside to catch the wind. If it is a windy day, they may have only to hold their wind socks up and let the wind blow them. If it is not windy or if the children have lots of energy, they may wish to run while holding their wind socks.

If the weather or your location does not allow you to go outside, have the children take turns running with their wind socks or turn on a fan.

After playing with the wind socks, discuss:

- ▼ I wonder, "What made your wind sock move?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How can you tell whether the wind is blowing?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How is God's Spirit like the wind?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How can you see what God's Spirit does?"



Celebrating God's Grace



Be aware of food allergies and provide alternative food choices if necessary.

Have a birthday party! Ask the children what kinds of things they like to do to celebrate a birthday.

Give each child an unfrosted cupcake and remember to have enough for invited guests. Lead them in the following steps:

- ▼ Poke a plastic straw into the center of the cupcake, and pull it out.
- ▼ Repeat three times to create a small hole in the center of the cupcake. Place a few mini chocolate chips into the hole.
- ▼ Frost with frosting or whipped topping.
- ▼ Sprinkle red sprinkles on top.

Check on your church's practice for using candles with children.

Put candles on the cupcakes, and invite the children to think of a wish they have for the church. Light the candles. Sing "Happy Birthday" to the church. Have the children blow out the candles. Say a prayer of thanks for food and enjoy eating the cupcakes. Talk about the gifts given by the Spirit to help the church grow, such as: singing, writing poems, dancing, caring, listening, helping.

Praying God's Grace

Highlight Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit in the story, which comes like a mighty wind. Comment that the words *wind* and *breath* are often used to describe the Spirit.

One way we can share our faith is by praying. When children don't know what to pray, they can offer a body prayer. Invite the children to stand and imagine they are trees swaying in the wind. Guide them, showing with swaying bodies and flowing arm movements how it feels to have the wind blow gently around you. Remind them that the Holy Spirit flows through each one of us too.

Extra Activity



Provide copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Invite the children to color in the word *Pentecost* using colors that represent wind and flames. Together, read the journal page prompts and give the children time to respond to them. Tell the children that each of the words in the picture at the bottom of the page means *peace* in a different language. Ask if any of the children know what some of the languages are. When all have had time to complete the page, allow time for children who wish to share their responses with the group.

FA *Many children have food and other allergies, such as latex, peanut, milk, egg, wheat, grass, mold, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Avoidance is the best practice. Provide alternate activities or use options to keep children safe.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Lead the children in cleaning up the worship space.

Ask the children to stand in a circle. Have a volunteer stand in the center of the circle. Tell the person in the center to move around the circle whispering like the wind, "God's spirit is for everyone." Have the children in the circle turn and face out. On the count of three, everyone whispers, then says, and then shouts the message out to the ends of the earth. Close with a prayer:



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

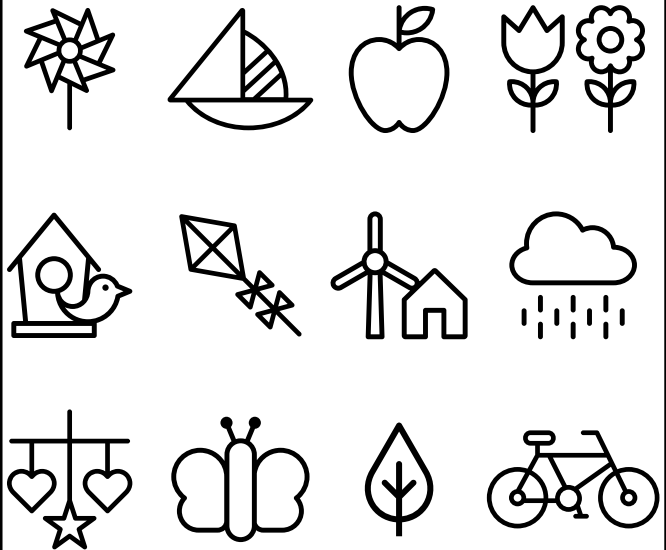
God, thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit. Help us to share the Spirit with the whole world. Bless us as we share our faith with others. Amen.

Thank the children and their guests for coming, and encourage them to return next week. To each child, say: “(Name), God’s gift of the Holy Spirit is for you. Now go and share it with others.”

PENTECOST

What does your hair look like on a windy day?

Which of these things blow in the wind?



What languages do you know?

