Pentecost
with Children and Families

Christians celebrate Pentecost on a day of Jewish celebration at the end of the early harvest. The story in Acts 2:1-42 tells how the early followers of Christ came together on Pentecost and bonded together into a body, ignited by the Holy Spirit, and felt prepared to spread the Word. Pentecost is the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The word, Pentecost, comes from the Greek word for five, penta, meaning the fiftieth day. It was also called the Day of First Fruits, Festival of Weeks, and Shabuoth. Early Christians often baptized new converts on this day, and they traditionally wore white. In the Christian tradition, we use the color red, remembering the red flames of the Holy Spirit. It is a celebration of hope and renewal of purpose and mission. It is a perfect time for children to celebrate being a Christian, sometimes in very different ways. How do we make the Day of Pentecost accessible for children who may not understand this holy day that concludes the Season of Easter?

Search Acts 2:1-42 with Children

Use the Common English Bible or one of the simple translations recommended from Discipleship Ministries’ Ministry with Children, emphasizing how excited the followers of Jesus became when they realized that the Holy Spirit would help them tell others about Jesus. Explain that the Holy Spirit is a way that God works within us, giving us the courage to follow Jesus in all of life. Talk about the fact that this was a time when people from many countries came to Jerusalem, and consequently there were people there who spoke many different languages. According to Luke, who wrote this story, the Holy Spirit helped the disciples speak in languages that these visitors to the city could understand.

Wonderings:

- I wonder what is most exciting about knowing Jesus.
- I wonder who might like to hear what you think about Jesus.
- I wonder how you can share that feeling with that person or someone else.
- I wonder who needs to know what a wonderful friend Jesus is to you.
- I wonder who you know that speaks another language.
- I wonder how you can be a friend to someone who speaks another language, as Jesus was a friend to others.
- I wonder what adults you can talk to about the Holy Spirit.
- I wonder what ideas adults have about the Holy Spirit.

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Activity Starters:

- Tell children you are going to give the Holy Spirit a chance to work inside them. Ask them to sit in silence for a minute, thinking of how they can help someone else. Let them talk and decide on one way to help someone else.
- Make bookmarks with a flame on it to put in the children's Bibles at this reference.
- Listen to wind chimes and remember the Holy Spirit as wind in Luke’s story. Make chimes as a reminder that the Holy Spirit is with us.

Conversation Starter:

Read the Apostles’ Creed together (United Methodist Hymnal, 881). Point out the references to the Holy Spirit as something that we United Methodists believe. Together, sing “Spirit of the Living God,” (UMH 393) a few times to help make a connection. These motions may be helpful:

- Spirit of the living God
- Fall afresh on me
- (repeat first two lines)
- Melt me
- Mold me
- Fill me
- Use me
- (repeat first two lines)

Encourage families to recognize the Holy Spirit in their lives

Families can use some of the wonderings above as well as singing “Spirit of the Living God” together. Suggest that they share times when they feel that God guided them to do something special, give someone encouragement, or act with courage.


Families Create Together

- Establish a few moments of quiet as a family before going to bed, listening to the quiet.
- Light a candle after the family meal and all sit together quietly looking at the flicker of the candle.
- Create a sacred space in the home where all members of the family can be still and listen for the Holy Spirit.

Reminder: Be sensitive to family dynamics.

Accessible Worship

Red is the color of Pentecost. Encourage everyone to wear red, orange, and yellow to represent the color of the flames.

Invite children to process with red, yellow, and orange streamers and banners.