

Pentecost

Deep Prep

Acts 2:1-21

The Big Idea: The Spirit equips Jesus' followers to communicate the good news.

Learning Goal: Learners will discover that God continues to lavish the Spirit on us and people everywhere.

Biblical Foundation

Pentecost is a day of fulfillment. Fulfilled is John the Baptist's proclamation of the coming Messiah (Luke 3:16-17) who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." With a fork, the farmer tosses up the wheat and chaff. The wind blows away the chaff; the wheat falls to the floor. The Spirit's coming fulfills Jesus' words telling the disciples to remain in Jerusalem "until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). A tongue of fire resting on each is a symbol of empowerment. Roman coins depicted Caesar with a tongue of fire above his head. The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy signals Jesus' inclusive and universal mission. The Spirit is poured out on women and men, young and old, slave and free (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). Devout Jews from every nation were in Jerusalem, including Jews and non-Jewish proselytes from varied places.

Theological Emphasis

The Holy Spirit is a prime actor in Luke and Acts. Jesus' coming was prophesied through the Spirit. The Spirit was at work preparing the way, in and with John, Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah. The Spirit led Zechariah to his encounter with Jesus. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, and empowered and anointed Jesus for his mission. The Spirit empowers others for mission and ministry. The Spirit empowers people to speak, witness, and prophesy. Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the name of Jesus confers the Spirit. Baptism in the Spirit may precede water baptism. Jesus' followers may confer the Spirit with the laying on of hands and through the Word. Jesus teaches through the Spirit. The Spirit is witness, guide, and advisor. The Spirit fills believers with the gifts of wisdom, faith, vision, comfort, joy, and power.

Historical Context

Pentecostalism is an important and fast-growing strain of Christianity in the United States and around the world. Originating in the nineteenth century in a revival called the Holiness Movement, which was rooted in Methodism and among poor and working-class people, Pentecostalism includes dozens of conservative Christian groups, including Assemblies of God (the largest), Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of the Nazarene, and others. Pentecostal movements are also in mainline denominations, such as Lutheranism, Catholicism,

and Anglicanism. Pentecostal churches vary in their teaching. As their name implies, these churches emphasize conversion and the gifts of the Spirit, particularly believing in and practicing speaking in tongues, which many believe is evidence of baptism by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism is growing, particularly in the southern hemisphere. Estimates number Pentecostals at more than a quarter of the world's Christians. In the United States, Pentecostals are the fourth largest Protestant Christian group, after Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans.

Contemporary/Cultural

At Pentecost, the disciples communicated using languages they had not known before. What ways do we have to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ? To paraphrase "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 116), "What language shall we borrow?" What actions? What media? The printing press wrought a revolution in the church not only as the Bible was printed but also as, during the Reformation, religious tracts were distributed. Translations of the Bible into many spoken languages and dialects have made God's Word more accessible. The widespread and growing use of television for proclamation has revolutionized the ways in which we communicate the gospel. Certainly this is good, but what does it mean that broadcasting the gospel via television requires vast amounts of money and investment? What does it mean that evangelists become wealthy from their television ministries? The first Pentecost gave rise to a community in which people held all things in common and shared as any had need (Acts 2:44-45).

Quick Prep

Acts 2:1-21

The Big Idea: The Spirit equips Jesus' followers to communicate the good news.

Learning Goal: Learners will discover that God continues to lavish the Spirit on us and people everywhere.

- At Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfills Joel's prophecy, John the Baptist's prophecy, and Jesus' promise.
- The Holy Spirit is a prime actor in Luke and Acts, at work before, during, and after Jesus' earthly life. According to Luke, the Spirit empowers believers for mission in Jesus' name, continuing to witness, guide, and advise.
- The Spirit fills believers with gifts, including wisdom, faith, vision, comfort, joy, and power.
- Pentecostalism is an important and fast-growing strain of Christianity in the United States and around the world.
- What ways do we have to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ? How does our use of media detract from or promote the gospel?

Adolescent Connection

The word *Pentecost* comes from a Greek root word which means 50. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, good Jews gathered for their traditional festival of harvest known as *Shavuot*. The Spirit that Jesus had promised came upon them and they were able to understand and communicate in a new way. The Holy Spirit is with us still and is available to any who wish to take time to be still and listen for its guidance. This may be news to some youth. Often youth feel they are alone and no one understands them. Reminding them of this promise that Jesus made in the Gospel of John (John 14:25-27) will help youth to know that they are never alone. The Holy Spirit is active today bringing the assurance that the students will never be abandoned.

Baptismal Connection

In the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism, a five-part question addresses each confirmand's intent to continue in the covenant God made with them in Holy Baptism. Here We Stand resources help adolescents—with support from parents, leaders, and the entire congregation—prepare to answer this question as they continue in their lifelong faith journey. Today's lesson focuses on the clause "to live among God's faithful people" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 201; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 236).

Welcoming

Prepare your large group space by playing upbeat music in the background and by welcoming learners as they arrive. Make a special effort to welcome and thank adult small group leaders for their presence and for being willing to help pass on the faith to the next generation.

- Begin by thanking learners for coming! Remind the group what a privilege you feel it is to serve God by leading confirmation, and what a gift from God you consider all of them to be.
- Ask learners to recall last week's Big Idea if they can. Reward the first person to get it right with a handful of candy or some other small treat to share with their small group. (Be aware of any food allergies in the group.) Ask for a volunteer to capture last week's lesson in their own words; affirm all genuine responses; keep going until you're satisfied everyone has been oriented.
- Project this week's Big Idea on the screen or write it in HUGE block letters on your presentation board or overhead slide. Invite learners to recite it with you aloud. Repeat it two or three times.

Skit: When You Need It Most

Ask or assign two boys to prepare and present the skit. In a pinch, grab enough volunteers from the audience to form an impromptu "readers' theater" troupe.

CHARACTERS: Rob (young, nice guy, bit of a square), Bernardo (young, nice guy, tries to be cool)

PROPS: pack of trading cards

Rob and Bernardo walk onstage, with Rob looking through a pack of trading cards.

ROB: Got it, got it, want it, got it. *(Gasps.)* Oh, awesome!

BERNARDO: Dude. When are you going to stop collecting those things?

ROB: I dunno. When it's not cool anymore.

BERNARDO: Okay...well, I don't want to shock you, but it's not cool anymore.

ROB: *(Looks at Bernardo.)* Really?

(Bernardo nods his head.)

ROB: But check this out. I just got the "The Encourager." He's totally awesome.

BERNARDO: The Encourager? Rob, man, that's lame.

ROB: No. No, it's not. He's totally cool. See, he has the power to give people power. Wham! Pow! *(Does a lame kick in the air.)* Whenever they're in need and feel like they can't make it, he's sent in to help them. He's cool.

BERNARDO: Yeah, right. Like that's real.

ROB: *(Shows Bernardo the card.)* Dude, look.

BERNARDO: *(Reading.)* "When things look their bleakest and hope seems far away, The Encourager will come and save the day." *(Looks at Rob.)* Um...that rhymed.

ROB: *(Very excited.)* I know! Doesn't he sound awesome?

BERNARDO: Sure. I won't lie to you. It'd be great if there were actually someone like that—who went around encouraging people and giving them hope and everything. But this card is still lame.

ROB: *(Takes the card back, noticeably upset.)* Whatever, man. You just can't admit that it's actually cool.

BERNARDO: *(Sarcastically.)* Yeah, that's it.

(Rob studies the card for a moment.)

ROB: Look. It has a hologram.

BERNARDO: Uh huh.

(Rob and Bernardo both look at the card.)

BERNARDO: *(Reading from the card.)* Huh, it says that "The Encourager" knows the needs of every person on the earth, without being told, and gives them comfort whenever they need it. All right, maybe that is cool.

ROB: Don't forget the hologram.

BERNARDO: Right. Right, the hologram is also cool.

(Rob does another lame kick in the air.)

ROB: Holograms!

BERNARDO: *(Shaking his head and walking away.)* You need help, man.

ROB: *(Yells after Bernardo.)* Whatever! You just don't know how cool I am! Wham! Pow! *(He does a defensive roll on the ground. When he comes out of it, he chops the air and does another lame kick. Then he shrugs and walks offstage.)*

Quiz Show

As practical, set up a quiz show environment with horns or buzzers for the contestants. Organize two teams or have two individuals face off for prizes (candy or other items of your choice). Ask a question, and the first person or group spokesperson to correctly answer the question gets a point. If the answer is incorrect, the other team or person gets a chance to answer to win the point.

Multiple Choice

1. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave the disciples power to...
 - a. get back at people who had picked on them.
 - b. share the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone. *(Correct.)*
 - c. get awesome air on their snowboards.
 - d. impress their friends and family with card tricks.
2. The most effective way to share your faith with someone is to imitate...
 - a. Billy Graham.
 - b. your pastor.
 - c. Marilyn Manson.
 - d. none of the above; just be yourself. *(Correct.)*
3. An effective way to tell people about God's love is to...
 - a. list the reasons they are going to hell.
 - b. invite them to worship at your church.
 - c. forgive them when they wrong you (since Jesus forgives you).

- d. both B and C. (*Correct.*)
4. The best place to share the good news of God is...
- a. wherever you are. (*Correct.*)
 - b. standing on a box on a street corner.
 - c. at church.
 - d. nowhere. You should leave it to the professionals (pastors).
5. The church as we know it today was initiated at...
- a. Christmas.
 - b. Jesus' baptism.
 - c. Easter.
 - d. Pentecost. (*Correct.*)
6. Pentecost took place in the city of...
- a. Rome.
 - b. Jerusalem. (*Correct.*)
 - c. Bethlehem.
 - d. Chicago.
7. Pentecost was a Jewish festival that took place _____ days after the Passover.
- a. 10
 - b. 14
 - c. 25
 - d. 50 (*Correct.*)
8. The Holy Spirit is God's gift for...
- a. perfect church attendance.
 - b. reading the Bible.
 - c. every believer. (*Correct.*)
 - d. every pastor.
9. The one unusual event that did not happen on the first Pentecost was...
- a. speaking in tongues.
 - b. the ripping of the temple curtain. (*Correct.*)
 - c. tongues of fire appearing.
 - d. the sound of a violent wind.
10. In Hebrew and Greek, the word for spirit means all of these things except...
- a. wind.
 - b. breath.

- c. spirit.
- d. fire. (*Correct.*)

Presenter's Interruptions

Keep this menu of short theme-related bits at the ready for those moments when you feel you're losing your audience.

- To get wandering minds back to the task at hand, cross your arms over your chest and say, "Serenity now!" Teach your students to say "Serenity now" whenever you cross your arms over your chest.
- Cross your arms over your chest and say, "Serenity now!" Invite someone who can speak another language or use sign language to teach students to say "Jesus loves you" in that language.
- Cross your arms over your chest and say, "Serenity now!" Hand out bits of modeling clay and instruct students to create something that portrays God's love. Ask volunteers to show and explain their creation to the group.

Opening Prayer

Teach the class responses to the students.

L: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, says the Lord.

C: Blaze, Spirit, set our hearts on fire!

L: Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.

C: Blaze, Spirit, set our hearts on fire!

L: Your old shall dream dreams, and your young shall see visions.

C: Blaze, Spirit, set our hearts on fire!

L: In those days, I will pour out my spirit.

All: And we will be God's people. Amen

My Faith Story

Tell the students about a time when you felt worried or as if you were alone in the world but still had a sense that God was with you. How did that sense come to you? Was it through your own prayer? Through a sermon or by reading scripture? Through the words and deeds of someone else? If so, who was it and what did he or she say or do? This may be more helpful if that person was not a pastor since our culture expects pastors to talk about God. Try to make the point that

the Holy Spirit uses all believers to proclaim Christ. How did the Holy Spirit assure you that God is with you all the time?

Guest Speaker

Invite someone who shares the love of Christ in unique or subtle ways to speak to your group. One idea is to ask a foster or adoptive parent to relate her or his story in a way that indicates how the Holy Spirit leads and enables her or him to share the love of Christ in this way. Talk about how this is sharing Christ's love. A teacher, nurse, or doctor may do the same. It would be great if you could invite someone in a less obvious profession to relate how his or her work helps proclaim the good news of God in Christ (perhaps a plumber, a police officer, a storeowner).

Cartoon Connection: Tong in Cheek

The Funny Shape of Faith, page 248

Have you ever watched a meeting of the UN on television? All those people from all those different countries, everyone speaking different languages, hundreds of translators and everyone with headphones on to hear the translators, and somehow everyone understands one another. It's not easy—it takes logistics, and technology, and lots of money to make it all happen. But it's worth the effort. Our world gets so much bigger when we understand more about one another. God wants us to understand each other too, and gives us what we need to be able to do just that, though we still may not be able to understand the language of our kitchen utensils!

What are ways in which the young people in your group connect with people who are different from them? What are ways in which those connections are difficult to make? How do we communicate the Good News without the use of language? What are ways that we can respond when we disagree with how people around us are treating each other?

Handbook Connection

Ask students what scares them most about the call to "proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 201). Have them gather in small groups to read "How to Share Your Faith with Someone" on pages 89-90 in *The Lutheran Handbook*. For point 1, have students brainstorm daily conversations that may offer openings to talk about their faith. Our culture is full of stereotypes of bad evangelism; for point 2, have the youth role-play "wrong" ways to share their faith. Remind everyone that item 2 reminds us that we should allow the Holy Spirit to guide us. Would anyone like to relate a time when item 4 was true for him or her? How does being a friend or helping others meet their needs demonstrate the good news of Jesus? Find out how many students have experienced item 6 by bringing someone to church, youth group, or other church activity. Brainstorm with the class if there are other ways beyond the seven listed in the book that they can share their faith with others. Write one idea at the bottom of page 89.

In their small groups have the students read through "How to Forgive Someone" on pages 101-102 of *The Lutheran Handbook*; ; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 236. Talk about times they have been forgiven and times when they forgave someone. Which was easier, to be forgiven or to give forgiveness? Does one feel better than the other? Remind students that when we give the sort of forgiveness Christ has offered us, we are sharing Christ and sharing our faith in God.

Bible Connection: Fanning the Flame

- Read aloud Acts 2:1-21. Point out that this event is considered the birth of the Christian church. Certainly, the disciples had gathered together before this time to pray, share personal stories of Jesus, and enjoy the fellowship of believers; but it wasn't until the coming of the Holy Spirit that they were considered to be "the church." What was different after they received the Holy Spirit? (*Once they received the Holy Spirit, they were equipped to tell others the good news of Jesus.*) What is the Holy Spirit's job? (*To create faith and to give believers the power to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.*) The purpose of the gifts the Spirit gave the disciples on the first Pentecost was not simply a display of God's power. There was a practical reason—to enable the disciples to spread the good news in word and deed.
- Ask students to name things that distinguish groups within their school. (*Answers may include sports, music, academic skills, social status, money, ethnic groups, farm kids, city kids, and so on.*) Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:4-13. Although life is much different now than it was in the church in Corinth, some things never change. There were class and ethnic differences in the community. There were also many different spiritual gifts in the church and the people were using them to make a name for themselves. Paul encouraged the people in the church to see these different spiritual gifts as a sign of God's presence. At the same time, he pointed out that all these different gifts were given by one Spirit for one reason—the good of others. Ask the students to pair up and tell their partner a gift they have and how that gift can be used for the good of others. To conclude, if anyone wishes to talk about his or her gift with the rest of the class, encourage the conversation.

More Bible Connections

- Before reading the parable of the good Samaritan, brief the students on the players: The priest and the Levite were religious leaders among God's chosen people. Those who heard this parable would have seen them as the "good guys." Samaritans were detestable enemies of the Jews, yet Jesus holds up a Samaritan as the epitome of following God's command to love your neighbor. The title "Good Samaritan" would have been an oxymoron. Read Luke 10:25-37. What gifts did the priest and Levite have? (*As religious leaders of God's chosen people they had a connection with God and a duty to represent God's people.*) Did they use their gifts when they encountered the beaten man? (*No.*) What did the Samaritan man have? (*Compassion, money.*) How did he use his gifts to help the beaten man? (*He acted as a friend, brought the man to a place that could help him, and paid for his care.*) Did the Samaritan ever mention God? (*Probably not.*) Who will God use to share the good news in our world? (*Anyone, including those we might least expect.*)
- Read Acts 8:26-40. How did Philip know to go to this man? (*He was directed by an angel of the Lord.*) The Ethiopian eunuch was reading scripture already. What more did he need to find out about Jesus? (*He needed someone to teach him about what he was reading. He needed someone*

to tell him about Jesus.) You can connect this passage to the lives of your students by pointing out that whatever their gifts are God will use them to share Christ with others, whether it is in word or deed. What a gift! The Holy Spirit uses each of us to get the gospel work done.

Object Lesson: Happy Birthday, Dear Church

Have someone carry in a large birthday cake with lots of lit birthday candles. (Before lighting candles, check your local fire codes and your congregation's fire policies regarding the use of open flames.) Explain that Pentecost is seen as the birth of the church. Why is it seen as the birth of the church? Didn't the disciples already meet together before this day, singing and praying? (*It is the birth of the church because it is when the disciples received the power from the Holy Spirit to share the good news with others. It is in the sharing of the good news that a group of Christ's followers became the church.*) What would be a good gift to give the church in celebration of its birth at Pentecost? Share the cake with each other. Have one of your small groups deliver cake to anyone else who may be in the church building at the same time as you; be sure to tell them that the cake is celebrating the birth of the church at Pentecost.

Science Connection: Floating and Flying

In advance of this lesson, assemble the following items and read through this experiment.

Hair dryer or leaf blower
Small empty cardboard tube
Table tennis ball
Beach ball
Balloon
Penny
Roll of toilet tissue, dowel

Turn on the hair dryer or leaf blower to a low setting and point it toward the ceiling. Have a student place a table tennis ball so it is in the airstream and watch it float. What happens if you move the hair dryer slowly from side to side? (*The ball should stay in the airstream.*)

Try this with the other objects. Slide a penny into a balloon before you inflate it to help with weight. How many items can float at once? What would the difference be between using a hair dryer and a leaf blower?

Now try this with the roll of toilet tissue. Slide the roll onto the dowel and hold tightly to the dowel. When the stream of air hits, the tissue should spin fast and unroll the paper even faster.

What would it have been like to be in the room with Jesus' followers at the first Pentecost? When that mighty wind blew, can you imagine how the power of it excited the people? They knew that Jesus had fulfilled his promise with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Video/DVD: Creating Community

Option 1: Everything Is Illuminated

Provide the movie *Everything Is Illuminated* (2005, PG-13)

Start cue: (Chapter 5, 00:18:54) A powder blue station wagon pulls across a large empty parking lot to the train station. Alex strolls inside to check the arrival schedule.

End cue: (Chapter 5, 00:20:54) Alex apologizes for his English, picks up Jonathan's bags and walks away. Jonathan calls after him, "My name is Jonathan."

Jonathan is traveling from the U.S. to the Ukraine in search of answers to some of the riddles of his family history. Before he arrives, he hires a translator to meet him at the train station and help him during his journey. But when he meets Alex, the man he hired, Jonathan is none too encouraged by Alex's language skills. The situation is reminiscent of the languages experienced at the Pentecost.

- Have you ever been in a situation in which you did not understand the language being spoken around you? How did you feel? How did you communicate?
- What might have happened on Pentecost if the disciples had communicated like Alex does? How did God make sure that the word got out clearly and effectively?
- How does the Holy Spirit help us communicate the gospel today?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 2: The Interpreter

Provide the movie *The Interpreter* (2005, PG-13).

Start cue: (Chapter 3, 0:14) A French delegate says, "*Monsieur le president, mesdames et messieurs....*" "Ladies and gentlemen, the situation in Matobo...."

End cue: "...and the problem of your predicament will disappear."

Silvia is a United Nations interpreter, one of only a few who can speak the Ku language. As a political crisis heats up, she is called to translate between American and Matoboan officials.

- Have you ever visited a country where the common language was different from your own? How does a translator create community among strangers? (*By facilitating communication and understanding between people.*)
- How might you have felt as a foreigner hearing Peter speak your language on Pentecost?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 3: The Wedding Planner

Provide the movie *The Wedding Planner* (2001, PG-13).

Start cue: (Chapter 5, 0:14) The best man raises his glass to give a toast. "May you have enough happiness to keep you sweet..."

End cue: "You must be Francine."

Mary's job as a wedding planner is to ensure that every aspect of the wedding day goes off without a hitch, including the nervous best man's toast to the newly married couple.

- When is a time you have felt empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak or act as God's messenger?
- Besides the spoken word, how can the church communicate the gospel today?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

NOTE: Consult Christian Video Licensing International at Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (1.800.462.8855 or www.mplc.com) for its umbrella licensing program covering the use of videos/DVDs or video/DVD clips in any public gathering.

Music: Miracles

Option 1: "Fire"

Provide the song "Fire" by U2 (from *October*, Universal-Island Records, Ltd., 1981).

Pentecost was an amazing, confusing, and perhaps frightening day for all of those who were a part of it personally. The music and lyrics of U2 in "Fire" capture in unbelievable clarity what it could have felt like to be a part of that Pentecost experience with the Holy Spirit.

- How would you have felt if you had been in a room that suddenly filled with tongues of fire?
- How would you react if you could suddenly understand all kinds of languages from many different countries in the world?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 2: "Church On Fire"

Provide the song "Church On Fire" by Russell Fragar (from *The Platinum Collection: Shout to the Lord*, Integrity Incorporated, 2000).

This song by Russell Fragar brings the fire of Pentecost to today's people and today's church. "Church On Fire" speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit in our church today, creating light and love and the strength to do amazing things for our community.

- Just who or what is the Holy Spirit?
- How is the Holy Spirit in our lives today?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 3: "I Believe I Can Fly"

Provide the song "I Believe I Can Fly" by R. Kelly (from *The R. in R&B Collection Volume 1*, Zomba Recording Corporation, 1993).

An encounter with Christian faith inspired R. Kelly to write the lyrics for this song. If there are miracles in life that we hope to achieve, we need to first have a willingness to accept God into our lives. Then we wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to deliver the power and love we need to reach out to others.

- Is there a goal in your life that seems difficult to reach? How does the belief that the Spirit can give you power to do anything change your view of the situation?
- Think about people you have encountered who seem filled with the Spirit. What qualities do they possess? What lessons could you learn from watching them go about their everyday lives?

Please note: This song has multiple versions, some of which may have a parental advisory warning on the label. If the song selection is not suitable for your group, please consider one of the other options for this lesson.

Learning in Motion

Prepare four or more stations within your meeting area. At each station provide a newspaper article that tells the story of people in need. Divide your large group into teams that will travel from station to station reading the stories and brainstorming ways to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. For instance, response to news about a devastating hurricane may include hosting a fund-raiser and giving proceeds to a help agency or organizing a mission trip that will help with the cleanup. Have groups record their ideas and share their best ideas with the large group. Point out words and deeds that proclaim Christ.

Closing Questions

Consider starting the Closing Time with a "Stump the Presenter!" moment in which learners may ask you questions that have come up during their small group discussions, but for which they want further explanation. This gives the small group leaders an "honorable out" when they get into sticky theological territory, and it's a great way to start out your final minutes together.

If there are no "Stump the Presenter!" questions, tickle learners with one or more of the following questions to connect Small Group Time with the larger conversation:

- True or false: The only way to share Jesus with other people is to preach sermons.
- In what ways do you share God's love?
- Where have you seen the Holy Spirit in action in your church, community, or family?

Closing Ritual

Teach the class response to the following litany. Encourage the class to say the line a bit louder each time. Choose someone to read the leader's part and pray the litany together.

L: The Holy Spirit gives the power to share God's love in Jesus Christ through words and deeds. Who has this power?

C: We've got the power!

L: People in our world are starving. Who will feed them?

C: We've got the power!

L: Somebody in your life does not know that God loves him or her. Who will share God's love with him or her?

C: We've got the power!

L: Someone in your school is lonely. Who will befriend her or him?

C: We've got the power!

L: Someone in your life needs forgiving. Who will forgive him or her?

C: We've got the power! Amen

Closing Blessing

Before anyone leaves to go home, make sure each learner receives the following blessing from the small group leader, or from you! (Or, if you like, consider writing your own blessing, based on your teaching time.) Have leaders trace the cross on each learner's forehead as they say the blessing.

Child of God, you have been marked with the cross + of Christ forever and, sealed by the Holy Spirit, you have the power to share God's love with the rest of the world. Amen

Small Group Leader Sheet: Pentecost

Instructions

Make sure each learner has a Learner Sheet for use during your discussion. At the end of the lesson they can take the Learner Take-Home Sheet to use with their household at dinner or bedtime.

Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.

Quick Prep

Acts 2:1-21

The Big Idea: The Spirit equips Jesus' followers to communicate the good news.

Learning Goal: Learners will discover that God continues to lavish the Spirit on us and people everywhere.

- At Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfills Joel's prophecy, John the Baptist's prophecy, and Jesus' promise.
- The Holy Spirit is a prime actor in Luke and Acts, at work before, during, and after Jesus' earthly life. According to Luke, the Spirit empowers believers for mission in Jesus' name, continuing to witness, guide, and advise.
- The Spirit fills believers with gifts, including wisdom, faith, vision, comfort, joy, and power.
- Pentecostalism is an important and fast-growing strain of Christianity in the United States and around the world.
- What ways do we have to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ? How does our use of media detract from or promote the gospel?

Prayer Time

Go around the group and have each learner share the best and worst thing from his or her week. Remind learners to pay special attention to (for example) the person on their right, as they will be praying for that person in a moment (alternate prayer partners from week to week). When the group has finished, prayer partners can pray for each other.

Key Words

HOLY SPIRIT is the third person of the Trinity. Among the jobs of the Holy Spirit are to create faith and equip believers to proclaim the good news of Christ in word and deed.

PENTECOST means "fifty." In the Christian church, Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit gave the apostles power to communicate the good news.

POWER is the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively, or it is a specific capacity, talent, or aptitude.

PROCLAIM means to announce officially and publicly; to declare the news.

Discussion Time

Use the following questions to kick off a conversation about the theme:

- Who is the first person you remember telling you about Jesus? *(Accept all answers.)*
- Tell us about a time when you helped someone in need. *(Accept all answers.)*
- Name something that you enjoy doing and are good at doing. How can you let the Holy Spirit use this ability to share the good news of Jesus with others? *(Accept all answers.)*
- What is scary about sharing the good news? What can make it seem easier? *(Accept all answers, and suggest that the Holy Spirit can help us.)*

Big Fun Idea

Find a recipe to make old-fashioned taffy. If you don't come up with a recipe, search the Internet for one. Get together at someone's house and have an old-fashioned taffy pull.

Big Serving Idea

Create some care packages for volunteers in your church, such as Sunday school teachers, choir members, and ushers. You might include items such as fruit, nuts, candy, stationery, or an inspirational book. Write notes thanking them for their part in helping to share the good news of Christ. Deliver the packages to their homes and thankfully present their gifts.

Funny Shape of Faith Small Group Devotions: Pentecost

Have a volunteer read the devotion that corresponds with this cartoon: "Tong in Cheek," *The Funny Shape of Faith: Devotions for the Rest of Us* (Augsburg Fortress, 2007), p. 249. Then use the following questions to spark group discussion.

What are some of your gifts of the Spirit? (Check out 1 Corinthians 12.)

How would you explain the Holy Spirit to someone who had never heard of it?

Can you recall some "Spirit-filled" moments where you knew something bigger than yourself was at work?

Learner Sheet: Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21

The Big Idea: The Spirit equips Jesus' followers to communicate the good news.

Big Fun Idea

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Prayer Time

Remember your partner's prayer needs—record them here.

Discussion Time

- Who is the first person you remember telling you about Jesus?
- Tell us about a time when you helped someone in need.
- Name something that you enjoy doing and are good at doing. How can you let the Holy Spirit use this ability to share the good news of Jesus with others?
- What is scary about sharing the good news? What can make it seem easier?

Learner Take-Home Sheet: Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21

Take this sheet home and keep it someplace near the dinner table, like on the fridge. At least three times next week at dinner, use Prayer Time and one other family activity to make your confirmation learning come alive!

Prayer Time

Pray this prayer together.

Holy Spirit, thank you for giving us the faith to trust Jesus. Please show us how to share his love with each other. Please use our family to share God's love with people around us. Amen

Key Words

Keep a family white board someplace near the dinner table, and write these words on it. Try writing a family definition for each one during the week.

HOLY SPIRIT

PENTECOST

POWER

PROCLAIM

Talk Time

- Would you rather prepare and deliver a sermon for your congregation or defend your worst enemy from a bully? Why?
- Would you rather serve food at a homeless shelter or teach kindergarten Sunday school? Why?
- Would you rather play in a worship band at your church or read the Bible verses for worship? Why?
- Would you rather sing the national anthem in your jammies at a nationally televised baseball game or tell your best friend that you forgive her or him because Jesus has forgiven you? Why?

Web Time

Go to www.actsofkindness.org and search for ideas that your family could use to share Jesus' goodness with others in your community. Remember, when Christ's people do good things for other people they are sharing the love of God with them.

Ritual Time

Talk about the day the child or children in the family were baptized. Remember what kind of day it was, where you were, who was there, and how the parents felt. Did the child cry before, during, or after the baptism? What family members or friends were present? Who are the sponsors or godparents? Conclude each child's story by making the sign of a cross on the child's forehead and saying, "You are baptized and you belong to Jesus."

Video (High Resolution): A Universal Translator!

Media file: Pentecost.mov

Observing religious custom, "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) gathered in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover (and, therefore, after Good Friday) to observe the feast of Pentecost. Being Jews themselves, Jesus' disciples were in the crowd. God took advantage of this enormous gathering to officially break the news of Jesus' Easter triumph. As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit enabled everyone to understand the good news, despite language differences.

Besides language differences, what barriers hinder the communication of the gospel today? Lacking the "translator" advertised in the video, how can Christians overcome these obstacles? Read Jesus' promises in Matthew 10:19-20 and John 14:25-27. How does God equip us to share the gospel?

Video (Low Resolution): A Universal Translator!

Media file: Pentecost.mp4

Observing religious custom, "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) gathered in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover (and, therefore, after Good Friday) to observe the feast of Pentecost. Being Jews themselves, Jesus' disciples were in the crowd. God took advantage of this enormous gathering to officially break the news of Jesus' Easter triumph. As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit enabled everyone to understand the good news, despite language differences.

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Music Clip: In Our Hearts

Media file: Pentecost.mp3

Song: "Come, Holy Ghost"

CD: *Daughters of God* (www.spiritandsong.com)

Artist: Sarah Hart

Arrangement © 2002 Sarah Hart, K. Hipp

Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up Thy rest;
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
To fill the hearts which Thou hast made

This hymn dates to about the ninth century, and was written by Rhabanus Maurus. It was translated roughly 1,000 years later by Edward Caswall and is still being sung today. The hymn "Come, Holy Ghost" itself serves as an excellent example of how the good news, and the Holy Spirit, continue to touch and bless generation after generation.

- Jesus represents a flesh-and-blood incarnation, but the Holy Spirit is harder to picture. What do you imagine the Holy Spirit to be like? How does the Spirit embody God's mystery?
- In Acts, the Spirit equips Jesus' followers to communicate the good news. How can we draw inspiration from Acts, and take heart from the struggles of those earliest Christians?

Note: You can purchase the CD featuring this song from the Augsburg Fortress online store (www.augsburgfortress.org).

PPT® Presentation (versions 2002 and later)

This presentation includes a video file and an audio file. All three (the presentation, the video, and the audio) will download at once as a ZIP archive. Unzipping the archive will produce a single folder containing all three files. **For the presentation to work properly, the files must all be in the same folder;** therefore, we recommend you not remove them from the folder produced when you unzip the archive, but rather move the entire folder as a single unit.

Media file: Pentecost.zip

PPT® Presentation (versions 1997-2000)

Media file: Pentecost.ppt

Cartoon

Media file: Pentecost.tif

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