

## 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.

## Early Years

In the topic '**Good News**' the children will explore what we mean by good news and know that everyone at times will have good news to share. They will appreciate their own good news, talk about how they feel when they have good news to share and celebrate the good news that they hear from other children and adults. These experiences will lay the foundation to help children understand the Good News that Christians celebrate at Easter – that Jesus is alive!

**Week 1:** Share some good news stories. Read *the Jolly Postman* by Janet and Alan Ahlberg (available on Youtube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpeo\\_0yoD0k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpeo_0yoD0k) or tell the story below. Discuss how it feels when we hear good news. Celebrate any good news that you have heard. Sing *If you are happy and you know it* with actions.

**Week 2:** Remind children of the good news of Easter. Look at the picture of Easter Sunday below and talk about how people celebrate Easter.

Read Luke's story of Pentecost (based on Acts 2: 1-4), looking at the picture of Pentecost below.

*Forty days after his Resurrection Jesus returned to his Father in heaven. His friends were sad. They missed him. They felt lonely and afraid without him. On Pentecost day, they were all together in the house. Crowds of people came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. The friends of Jesus did not go out to join them. They stayed all together in the house. They talked about Jesus and remembered what he had told them. As the wind filled the room, they began to feel different. Joy and happiness filled their hearts. It was wonderful. They knew that Jesus had kept his promise to send a new friend, the Holy Spirit. "Let's go out and join the crowds." Peter said. "Let's tell them the Good News that Jesus is alive."*

Based on Acts 2: 1-4.

See The Story of Pentecost Powerpoint <https://missiontogether.org.uk/pentecost/>

When the Holy Spirit came it felt like a wind blowing through the house. Children can make windmills to look at the power of the wind (template below). Or make and decorate an 'Alleluia' banner (a special word which means 'Praise God').

**Week 3:** Pentecost is often called the 'birthday of the Church'. The feast celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. The Holy Spirit is a new friend that Jesus had promised to send them. With a new friend the disciples felt full of joy and happiness. They were no longer frightened and were able to go out and share the Good News with others. So many people heard the good news about Jesus on that day and that is why it is called the birthday of the Church.

The Holy Spirit is our friend who guides and helps us. We cannot see the wind, but we can feel it. In the same way, we cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can feel the joy and happiness the Holy Spirit brings to us.

Children can make streamers with the words 'Share the Good News of Jesus with everyone'.

Use the balloon template below to draw pictures/write about how they share and celebrate the Good News that Jesus is alive and sent the Holy Spirit to be our friend. The template may be headed, "*We celebrate the Good News by....*"

Decorate the cake template below to celebrate the birthday of the Church.

**Week 4:** Celebrate the story of Pentecost – what can you remember about the story?  
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>