

Scriptures

Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 104

Wind and Fire**We welcome the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.**

- ◆ The Holy Spirit comes like wind and fire to the disciples gathered in prayer.
- ◆ Older children value coming together with their friends. Today's story affirms that powerful things happen when we gather together!
- ◆ Today's session concludes the celebration of 50 days of Easter as it explores the story and images of Pentecost.

Core Session

- ◆ Getting Started
- ◆ Today's Gospel
- ◆ Radio Play
- ◆ Praying Together

Enrichment

- ◆ Explore the Good News
- ◆ Psalm Review
- ◆ Express Yourself: Go with the Flow! (*index cards*)
- ◆ Easter Tree Craft (*branches, flowerpot, sand, eggs, nut pick or manicure scissors, bowl, ribbons, seeds, scraps of paper, cotton balls, toothpicks; optional: food colors*)
- ◆ Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

Helps for Leaders

- ◆ More about Today's Scriptures
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ Liturgy Link: Pentecost: Gift of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ The World of the Bible: Peace

✓ Getting Started (5-15 minutes)

Participants brainstorm meanings for the words *holy* and *spirit*.

Ask one participant to open the session by leading participants in the Easter greeting:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Explain that this is the last day of Easter, the last day we will use the Easter greeting and the paschal candle. We call this day Pentecost. The word *Pentecost* means “50th day.” Pentecost is the 50th day of Easter. Ask:

- ◆ What do we celebrate on Pentecost? (*the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church*)

Invite participants to make webs of words that explore the meanings of the word *holy* and the word *spirit*. Write the word *holy* in the center of one section of a board or newsprint; write the word *spirit* in the center of another section.

Directions to the participants:

- ◆ Make a web of words around the word *holy* that help us understand what the word means; you can write as many words as you like.
- ◆ Make the web grow from words already written. For example, if one participant writes the word *God* on a line attached to the word *holy*, another participant might attach the word *Jesus* to the word *God*.
- ◆ Let's work together to make the webs as full as we can.

After 5 minutes of work, discuss:

- ◆ What are some meanings we found for the word *holy*?
- ◆ What are some meanings we found for the word *spirit*?
- ◆ Which of these words would you use to describe the *Holy Spirit*? Why?

Invite participants to read together the Pentecost story.

✓ Today's Scripture (10-15 minutes)

Help participants find **Acts 2:1-11** in their Bibles, explaining that the book of Acts, which tells stories from the early Church, is the fifth book of the Bible. Begin with a shared meditation. Set a prayerful

atmosphere by reading the passage slowly: ask them to listen for the words or phrases that catch their attention. Ask:

- ◆ What word or phrase did you hear in today's reading?

Be sure to share your own response, too. Discuss:

- ◆ How does the Holy Spirit come to the believers?
- ◆ After the believers receive the Holy Spirit, what are they able to do?
- ◆ What do you wish the Holy Spirit could give you the power to do? Why?
- ◆ Have you ever felt that God gave you power to do something? What happened? How did you feel?

✓ Radio Play (15-30 minutes)

Invite participants to invent an imaginary radio play based on today's story from **Acts 2:1-11**. Encourage participants to make decisions about roles, scenes and dialogue. Participants can stick closely to the scripture version, or invent a modern-day version of Pentecost.

Remind participants that in a radio play, nothing can be seen—only sounds can be heard. Invite participants to record their play on tape. Enjoy listening to the play together as you replay the tape.

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Light the candle made in the 2nd Sunday of Easter. Invite participants to continue experimenting with using scripture verses as prayer. Help the participants memorize these words from Acts 2:4: *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit*.

Memorize the verse together by saying it together slowly and rhythmically several times. Then pause and say:

- ◆ How do you wish you could feel God's Holy Spirit in your life? Use your own words to tell Jesus what you want.

Pause, then slowly repeat once more the scripture verse above. Close by praying:

- ◆ Lord Jesus, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit long ago. Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit today. *Amen*.

Note: Distribute this week's *At Home with the Good News* to group members (or e-mail it to families).

□ Explore the Good News

(5-15 minutes)

Page 1 of today's *Explore the Good News* names Christmas, Easter and Pentecost as three great feasts of the Christian year. You might spend a few moments **before the session** reflecting on your own memories of and information about these days.

On page 2 group members will find the scripture skills activity called Explore God's Word they can complete together.

Gather group members around the poster *Spirit Power*, attached to this document. Invite group members to pick one or two of the stories to discuss:

- ◆ How does the story point to one way to carry out the work of Jesus in the world?
- ◆ How could we share in that kind of work?

Group members can write ideas in the space provided.

□ Psalm Review (10-20 minutes)

As in the session for the 7th Sunday of Easter, group members review parallelism in the psalms. In the sessions for the 4th-6th Sundays of Easter, we explored parallelism, the poetic device used throughout the book of psalms. In this session we ask group members to review three kinds of parallelism:

- ◆ extension (explored in the 4th Sunday of Easter)
- ◆ reversal (explored in the 5th Sunday of Easter)
- ◆ echo (explored in the 6th Sunday of Easter)

If group members missed any of these activities, we recommend you simply use one of these earlier activities in today's session instead of this review activity.

Remind group members that Hebrew poetry in the psalms uses a unique way of building a poem. Instead of rhyming word sounds, Hebrew poetry "rhymes" thoughts instead of words. The second line might echo the first line, as in this verse:

Your presence fills me with joy
and brings me pleasure forever.

—Psalm 16:11

The second line might extend the first line, as in this verse:

I call to the Lord for help,
And from his sacred hill he answers me.

—Psalm 3:4

The second line might reverse the first line, as in this verse:

The Lord will take away the strength of the wicked,
but protect those who are good.

—Psalm 37:17

Invite group members to choose any verse from **Psalm 104**. What kind of verse do they think it is: extension, echo or reversal? Encourage group members to repeat with more verses. Acknowledge that the division between these kinds of verses is not clear cut; allow for disagreement.

You can extend this activity by inviting participants to compose "psalm conversations." Divide group members into pairs. Give each pair one psalm verse to work with. You can choose these at random from **Psalm 104**.

Explain:

- ◆ Now invent a conversation that will express the meaning of a psalm verse.
- ◆ Read your verse together. Decide if the second half of the verse echoes, extends or reverses the first half. You can ask friends for help in deciding!
- ◆ One of you will go first and move in a way that expresses the meaning of the first half of your verse. Be sure to end with a strong shape.
- ◆ The other person will move in response to that first shape, and end with a shape that either echoes, extends or reverses the first shape.
- ◆ Try to use movements that are expressive from beginning to end. That means, try to move in a way that you *don't* usually move.
- ◆ Try to make your final shapes work together to make one single shape.

Allow 5 minutes for work. You can play background music as group members work together.

Invite pairs to show their conversations to the rest of the group. Read aloud that pair's verse as they move.

□ Express Yourself (10-20 minutes)

Go with the Flow!

Activity Soundtrack: Play Daria's version of the African-American spiritual "The Spirit Song." (Open your Spring-A Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.) This joyful song lends itself to group singing and verse invention, too. As the words proclaim:

*You've got to dance when the Spirit says dance
When the Spirit says dance, you've got to dance—oh,
yeah!—
You've got to dance when the Spirit says dance.*

Before the session review the contents of the *Express Yourself... Go with the Flow!* poster, attached to this document. This poster is designed as a group of enrichment activities built around the center photograph titled "Fountain in front of St. Peter's."

In the session, play music as you view the photograph together. Explain:

- ◆ One reason fountains and fonts are built in and around churches is that water is an ancient symbol for the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Spirit, is one of the days the Church chooses for baptizing new Christians.
- ◆ How did Jesus' friends see him when he died on the cross?
- ◆ How did Jesus' friends see him after he rose from the dead?
- ◆ How did Jesus' friends see him after he ascended into heaven? How could they still know Jesus?
- ◆ How can we know Jesus now? How can we see him in new ways?

Invite group members to find on the poster the activity called Frame It. Ask group members to follow the directions under this heading to make "viewfinders" that help them see the world in different ways. After the activity discuss:

- ◆ How can we help one another see Jesus in new ways?

□ Easter Tree Craft (15-30 minutes)

Participants decorate a final Easter egg to take home.

Directions to participants:

- ◆ Use a nut pick or pair of manicure scissors to make a tiny hole in each end of the egg. Blow through one end to force the egg into a bowl.
- ◆ Use any of the materials to decorate your egg. Look on the tree to remember some of the ways we have decorated eggs during the weeks of Easter. (*If necessary review methods used in the sessions for the 2nd-7th Sundays of Easter.*)
- ◆ You can show an event from today's scripture, a picture of the risen Jesus, a symbol of the Holy Spirit or any other scene you like. (*The eggs may be dyed first. Make each dye by mixing ¾ cup water, 1 teaspoon vinegar and 10-20 drops food color in a cup.*)
- ◆ You can take your finished egg home at the end of the session.

You may want to invite participants to take their other eggs home today as well. Encourage participants to add an Easter egg tree to their family's Easter traditions.

INFO Where You'll Find Everything Else

- ◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
 - Backgrounds and reflections for today's readings, titled *More about Today's Scriptures*.
 - An optional (and ongoing) *Faith Skills* activity, this week exploring fellowship.
 - A helpful article looking at *Older Children and the Lectionary*.
 - The *Express Yourself... Go with the Flow!* poster, to be used in the Express Yourself activity.
 - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News*, to print and distribute *or* to e-mail to families for use at home.
- ◆ Open your Spring-A Seasonal Resources folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
 - Information on Spring-A's *Models of the Faith*.
 - A printable article further exploring the meaning of *Pentecost Sunday*.
 - A printable article examining *Pentecost Geography*.
 - The *Introduction for Intermediate* for **Living the Good News**.

More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings welcome the arrival of God's Spirit at Pentecost. In Acts, God's Spirit, poured out on the disciples, astonishes and empowers the community. In Numbers (ALT), Moses desires the spirit to fall on the whole community. Paul explains to the Corinthians that we come together to worship and serve in the Holy Spirit. In the gospel, Jesus comes to his friends and bestows on them the Spirit of peace and forgiveness.

Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, celebrated 50 days after Passover. The first fruits of the spring wheat harvest were presented, and the covenant with God was renewed. The promised outpouring of the Spirit and the beginning of the Church's mission both occurred during this festival time.

Luke understands the gift of the Spirit as a reversal of Babel (see Genesis 11:1-9) and the fulfillment of the promise of a new covenant (see Jeremiah 31:33). God's covenant law will dwell in each individual believer.

The words given by the Spirit are not mere babbling but proclamation. The variety of languages in which the message about God's powerful works was communicated anticipate the spread of the gospel to all nations. Peter helps the crowd to interpret the experience. While some could only explain the peculiar events as the result of human dissipation, Peter calls the events supernatural generosity and the marvelous fulfillment of an ancient promise found in Joel 2:28-32.

Numbers 11:24-30 (Alternative Reading)

This reading helps us to understand the Old Testament role of God's prophets. God speaks to Moses, who is the pattern for later Jewish prophets. God shares Moses' gift of the Spirit with seventy elders. But Eldad and Medad, who were not with these elders, also receive God's Spirit and prophesy.

When told of this, instead of thinking he is in control of prophetic gifts, Moses recognizes that such a gift from God ought to be bestowed on everyone. Moses sees that prophecy is a gift, given freely to whomever God wants. He refuses to limit God's Spirit and is willing to acknowledge God's gifts in people who are not part of the "in" group.

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

The Corinthian community was torn by dissension over the characteristics, distribution and use of "spiritual gifts" (12:1). Paul emphasizes that these are gifts of grace to all, not just the private possession of certain people. He points out the triune operation of God in these gifts: the Holy Spirit as the giver, Jesus as the One to whom service is given, and God the Father as the One at work in the gift.

The gifts are complementary and meant for the common good. Every gift has an important place in the life of the community. The list of gifts is not exhaustive, for other lists differ (12:28-30; Romans 12:6-8). The purpose of all the gifts is to create not division but unity in diversity. Paul illustrates this by using the image of the body to show the Corinthians the interdependence of all in the Christian community.

John 20:19-23

This postresurrection appearance of Jesus is shared with the other gospels. Jesus shows his wounds to establish that the crucified Jesus and the risen Christ are one and the same. John's account stresses the fulfillment of the promises made in the Farewell Discourse: Christ's return and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For John, the coming of the Holy Spirit is intimately linked to the resurrection. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, creating humanity anew for eternal life. To this new creation, the Church, he then bestows the power to mediate forgiveness. Its mission will divide people by their response.

John 7:37-39 (Alternative Gospel)

In this passage, Jesus affirms once again, as he had earlier in his encounter with the Samaritan woman, that he is indeed the source of the "living water" that will nourish us for eternal life. In this context, however, he makes it clear that this water is the Holy Spirit that will pour forth after they receive it when Jesus has departed.

Reflection

Shalom or peace was a common greeting in Jesus' time, but how different it must sound in the voice of one who died and now returns. Today's gospel shows Jesus coming to the disciples in a new and entirely different way. So, after this Pentecost event, we live in a new way. This scene echoes back to the creation story in Genesis, where God breathes life into human beings. When Jesus breathes on his friends, he makes it clear that the new, transcendent life is always gift. Anything they do from this point forward is God acting through them.

Jesus doesn't speak of organizing or enforcing rules, but offers a liberating message: "You are sent as I was sent." We all know what that means: heal, encourage, love until the last drop of energy evaporates. It is both harder and simpler than what we often think of as the church's work: teach morality, preserve the organization, obey the laws. But the strength to carry out this command will come from the Holy Spirit—light as breath, necessary as oxygen.

Furthermore, the Spirit will help us forgive even when it is excruciatingly hard. Forgiveness will unbind both those who forgive and those who are forgiven. It's as freeing as walking through a locked door.

Liturgy Link

Pentecost: Gift of the Holy Spirit

On Pentecost, the Church celebrates God's gift of the Holy Spirit to God's holy people. Luke, writing in the Acts of the Apostles, describes the descent of the Holy Spirit as fiery tongues resting on the assembled disciples. It is important to notice that the disciples were gathered together when the Holy Spirit came upon them. From the beginning, the experience of the Holy Spirit comes as a corporate experience. Individual members participate as part of the whole Body of Christ.

Promise and power are two key words referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The promise is fulfilled and the power bestowed in the event in the upper room at Pentecost. The power immediately becomes clear as the apostles proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. That their message is understood by all of the listeners without translation is a sign that God's word is no longer limited to one people or one place, one language or one race, but is now available to all people everywhere.

Peter's preaching at Pentecost concludes with a response to his hearers' question: "What should we do?" The apostle replies, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This is still the Christian message and the Christian task!

The World of the Bible

Peace

Peace (Hebrew *shalom*) describes the experience of fullness or completeness—lacking nothing that one needs for a full and happy life. Peace is a gift that comes with God's presence. Thus it is also the goal for the life of the covenant community.

The way to peace is justice—establishing and maintaining rightly ordered relationships for the covenant community according to God's guidelines.

As a greeting, peace is a wish for the fullness of life, for union with God and harmony with others leading to happiness for all.