**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.

**Year 2**

In the topic **‘Spread the Word’** the children will explore the importance of passing on messages. They will learn the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit (John 14: 18-19) and how, at the Ascension, Jesus returned to his Father in heaven after the Resurrection. They will hear the story of Pentecost and how the disciples were filled with great joy and courage and they will understand that the Holy Spirit can be a helper and guide in our lives.

**Week 1**: Talk to the children about messages and their experience of passing on messages. Tell any stories about passing a message on. Think about different messages and what might be the best way to pass each on, for example: a school football match has been cancelled, a birthday invitation, the birth of a baby. Ask children to think about different messages they have passed on and how they shared them, for example, text, telephone, letter, invitation, whatsapp. Add some examples to the chart.

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| --- | --- |
| A message I passed on | How I shared the message |
| Told my sister that tea was ready | I spoke to her |
| Told my auntie that I’d lost a tooth | I telephoned her |

**Week 2**: Share the story of Jesus going back to his Father in Heaven, leaving his friends with a promise.

Jesus’ friends were delighted that God had given Jesus new life. But they remembered that he had said he was going back to his Father. The thought of that made them sad again and they worried about how they would manage without him. They remembered his promise to send a new helper. We can read Jesus’ message to them in John’s gospel.

“I shall be with you only a little longer.

Don’t worry. I will not leave you all alone.

I will ask my Father and my Father will give you another friend to be with you forever. This friend, the Helper, will help you to remember all the things I have done and everything I have told you.

I am going back to my Father who sent me.

It is better for you if I go away.

If I go I will be able to send someone else to help you - the Holy Spirit of truth.

The Holy Spirit will guide and lead you.

The Holy Spirit will help you to understand all the things I have done and everything that I have said to you. The Holy Spirit will teach you everything that I have learned from my Father. The Holy Spirit will help you to know how you are to live, now and in the future.”

Children write a postcard, as if you were one of Jesus’ disciples, telling a friend about the message of Jesus’ promise. See the template.

**Week 3**: Share the story of Pentecost Day.

After Jesus had gone back to his Father, his friends stayed together with Mary, Jesus’ Mother. Peter was there and James and John and all the others. They missed Jesus very much. They felt weary and lost. They couldn’t get up and get on with their lives. They didn’t know what to do. They talked about their time with Jesus, and wondered about his promise, ‘I will not leave you alone’.

Then on Pentecost day everything changed. It was as if they had been made new, re-created. They were different people. They were filled with life, joy, peace and happiness.

They knew that Jesus had kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit, who would be with them always. They wanted to share this happiness and they got up straight away to go out to tell everyone.

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

The Holy Spirit has filled Jesus’ friends with new life. They are not afraid anymore, they wanted to share their joy. Christians too can spread the word about this happiness because they know that Jesus has brought new life for everyone through the Holy Spirit.

The Good News is that the Holy Spirit is a helper and guide for everyone, so they can spread God’s love. The Holy Spirit helps us share God’s love by the way we live our lives.

Children could learn this prayer to the Holy Spirit and design a poster showing some of the ways in which Christians spread the Good News to everyone through how they live (for example by showing kindness, sharing, helping others). They can use the dove or flame template (Both symbols of the Holy Spirit.)

*Come Holy Spirit,*

*fill us with your joy,*

*fill us with your love,*

*fill us with your peace.*

*Help us to spread the Good News of God’s love to everyone.*

*Amen.*

**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>