

# Pentecost Sunday

This week's texts have in common a strong emphasis on the Spirit of God. The Spirit is poured out on all nations and peoples so that through this outpouring all nations may be blessed and receive the good news. There is also prevalent imagery of the Spirit as breath and wind. The wind of the Spirit is portrayed as the breath of life that swoops in and enlivens fearful disciples and dry bones alike. The presence of the Spirit is the continuation of God's redemptive work completed in Christ. Through adoption, the sharing of the Spirit and redemption of humanity will positively affect the whole of creation. It is clear that God cares for all of creation, not only humanity, and redemption is for all creation.

## Focus scripture: Acts 2:1–21

Acts 2:1–21 Pentecost is another name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks or Shavuot, a one-day festival 50 days after the Passover. It recalls when the Israelites offered God the first fruits of the harvest. As they shed the agrarian-based lifestyle, Shavuot became the festival celebrating the seminal event in Jewish religious history: the revelation at Mount Sinai.

The advocate whom Jesus promised the disciples has arrived. The imagery of wind and fire are reminiscent of the theophanies when God's presence was made known through physical manifestations. Throughout the Bible, wind represents God's presence as Spirit. The Spirit represented as wind is also a symbol of regeneration and new birth. Many scholars view the occurrence of speaking in other tongues as the reversal of the events that occurred at the construction of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9).

The arrival of the Holy Spirit prepares and empowers the church to carry out the mandate that Christ issued his disciples. Believers are equipped to carry out Christ's work in the world. The central theme in the excerpt from the book of Joel is that God will pour out the Holy Spirit onto all peoples. This affirms the inclusivity of the Spirit and the evangelistic nature of the church.

In **Ezekiel 37:1–14**, the prophet writes to the Judahites exiled in Babylon and to those who remain in Jerusalem. The main message is a restoration of hope. The bones are a metaphor of how the people are viewing their current circumstances. To them, the Israelite community as a united people is dead. Ezekiel is not predicting the resurrection of the entire Israelite nation. Although they look onto dry bones that have been dead and buried, God will bring them back to life.

**Psalms 104:22–34** shows that God's creation is not confined to human beings;

God's care extends into all aspects of creation. God is continually and intimately involved in the inner workings of the world and all within it.

**Romans 8:22–27** implies creation itself has been in a period of birth, bringing something new into the world. This labour is a time of pain, hard work, and great anticipation. The adoption of humanity into the family of God also benefits the whole of creation. The redemption that humanity experiences at the time of this adoption extends to the entirety of God's creation. No longer will Earth be ruled over in futility but it will be taken care of, as always intended. All creation is in birthing pains. We wait with bated breath for the Spirit, who has started a work within us, to bring it to completion.

**John 15:26–27; 16:4b–15** offers more metaphors for the Spirit – the advocate who speaks on our behalf; the helpers; the one who comforts, strengthens, and empowers. The Spirit will illuminate Jesus' teaching for believers and propel them to tell of God's love and care.

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Each of this week's passages are concerned with the involvement of the Spirit in God's creation. The outpouring of the Spirit is portrayed as the outpouring of the breath of life that rushes in to renew what is perceived dead. The Spirit is shown to unify individuals across languages and nationalities with the intention that every nation will be blessed by the gospel message. A theme of hope runs through these passages like a golden thread that runs the length of an elaborate tapestry. God is still at work, even amongst dead bones, bringing new life into the most unexpected places. Where do you see God bringing life into the unexpected areas of your life? For what do you pray for the breath of new life?



## Focus scripture Acts 2:1–21

**Additional scripture**  
**Acts 2:1–21 or Ezekiel**  
**37:1–14**  
**Psalms 104:24–34, 35b**  
**Romans 8:22–27**  
**John 15:26–27;**  
**16:4b–15**

**Holy God, your power shines through in the elements of water and fire. You have shown there is within both the power to destroy and to build up, to end life and create it anew. You have baptized us with both and revealed the work you intend in and through us. May it be. Amen.**

## Lecture Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and click on the link.

## The Focus for All Ages



This session is designed for all ages to come together for approximately one hour to explore the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you will be using this plan with a single age group, you may need to adapt the materials for your particular group and follow a familiar format.

The Pentecost story is told every year and is foundational to the story of the Christian faith. Such stories are important to everyone, young and old, new to the Christian faith, or a child of the church. This session is written for a group of all ages who have come together to learn about and celebrate the Pentecost story found in the book of Acts. Unlike other special days of the Christian year, Pentecost was celebrated by the Jews long before Jesus was born. This harvest festival comes 50 days after Passover. Chris-

tians today celebrate it 50 days after Easter.

Pentecost is sometimes called “the birthday of the church” and all-age events can celebrate the communal life of a congregation by providing an opportunity for people to meet and discover new friends and faith models. Plan the activities so the age groups interact. Pray that participants will experience in this session the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that your congregation will continue to be renewed by God’s Spirit.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Psalm 104:24–34, 35b, Ezekiel 37:1–14, John 15:26–27, 16:4b–15, Acts 2:1–21, Romans 8:22–27, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 103).
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).
- ❑ Prepare a worship space with red fabric, Bible with a bookmark placed in the book of Acts, candle, matches, and offering basket.

### Gather

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song “Look Up, Look Down” (pp. 24–25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #9 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring self-adhesive name tags.

### Engage

- ❑ Bring this week’s resource sheet “[God’s Spirit](#).”
- ❑ Print the discussion questions in Engage on slips of paper, one per group of five.

### Respond

Choose from the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** copies of the top section of this week’s resource sheet “[Pentecost Activities](#),” crepe paper streamers or wide ribbon (shades of blues, reds, yellows, oranges), embroidery hoops, long cardboard tubes, fishing line
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of the bottom section of this week’s resource sheet “[Pentecost Activities](#),” sheets of coloured paper
- ❑ **Writing zone:** sheet of poster board, different colours of markers
- ❑ **Music zone:** recording of and lyrics for “Alleluia, Praise to God” (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20 on *Music CD*, Vol. 7. Also available as .mp3 and sheet music download); red crepe paper streamers, rhythm instruments
- ❑ **Bible zone:** copies of [biblical background](#) material (p. 103)

### Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song “I’ve Got a Voice” (pp. 20–21 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



# Pentecost Sunday

## Scripture

Acts 2:1–21

**FOCUS** To celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit

## Gather

**Welcome** participants as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. Distribute name tags and invite group members to print their first names and decorate their tags. Help younger children as needed.

### Opening ritual

**Call to gather** Invite participants to gather in the worship space. Point out the red fabric and explain that this colour marks this as a special day, Pentecost Sunday. Ask a volunteer to light the candle and receive an offering.

**Sing** “Look Up, Look Down” (pp. 24–25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #9 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Pray** O God, your Spirit gives life to all the Earth. We ask you to be with us as we open ourselves to the joy and wonder of this day. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

### Connecting with the focus

Ask:

- **Where can you see signs of the spirit of God blowing in the world today? Is it a strong wind or gentle breeze?**
- **When you are outside, how can you tell if the wind is blowing?**

Explain that there is a surprising wind in today’s Bible story.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Explain that when Jesus left his followers after the Resurrection, he promised that they would receive the gift of God’s Spirit. In this week’s story from the Bible, all Jesus’ friends and followers are together in Jerusalem to celebrate a special day called the Feast of Pentecost. It was a time to thank God for the harvest.

### The Bible story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship space and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Acts. Today’s story begins with a description of the streets of Jerusalem on this special day of Pentecost. Read the story on the resource sheet “God’s Spirit” based on **Acts 2:1–21**. Share initial responses to the story as a whole group.

**Conversations** Invite participants to form groups of four or five, each group with a mix of children, youth and adults. Give each group a slip of paper with the following questions:

- **What surprises did you hear in this story?**
- **What does this story say about the power of the Holy Spirit?**
- **How do you think people’s lives were different after that day?**

### The Bible story and us

Pentecost has been called the birthday of the church. Invite participants to think about their own congregation.

- **What is God’s Spirit helping our church to do?**

The church has been celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost for hundreds of years. Continue that celebration in the Respond zones.

## Respond

Review the choices of activities and invite the group to choose one or more zones in which to participate. Encourage older group members to help younger group members in each zone.

- ❑ **Art zone: Pentecost streamers** Fire and wind were symbols of the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Pentecost Activities](#)” and invite participants to use the supplies provided to create wind catchers or batons. Some might like to make one or more large wind catchers to hang in the church building; others might like to make smaller individual wind catchers or batons to take home. If weather permits, take the streamers outside to wave through the air.
- ❑ **Quiet zone: Pentecost poetry** Distilling the wonder of the Pentecost story into a few words can help participants to think more deeply and clearly. Distribute paper and information about Haiku poems on the bottom of the resource sheet “[Pentecost Activities](#).” Explain that these kinds of poems usually do not rhyme. Have participants work individually or in small groups (younger and older ages together) to choose words from the Pentecost story and use these to create poems. Create a display of the poems for the church hall or church newsletter. Consider posting in the Poem and Prayer Gallery in the Library section the [Seasons website](#).
- ❑ **Writing zone: Pentecost litany** Invite participants to share the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost by creating a litany based on the reading from Acts 2. Gather in groups of three or four, distribute paper, and ask each group to write several lines, such as, “God gives the Holy

Spirit to everyone” or “God calls us to dream dreams.” Have each group print their lines on a sheet of poster board (in different colours) to create one long prayer, adding the phrase “Come, Holy Spirit” in between each line as the repeated response. Display in the church hall.

- ❑ **Music zone: Pentecost movement** Invite participants to celebrate Pentecost with music and movement. Distribute the lyrics for the song, “Alleluia, Praise to God” and practice saying the words in both languages. Then teach the song using the *Seasons Music CD* or an MP3 downloaded from the [Seasons website](#). Distribute streamers and instruments and invite participants to sing the song as they move around to the rhythm of the music. Continue with other joyful songs if desired.
- ❑ **Bible zone: Pentecost readings** This zone is particularly for older youth and adults who would like to explore all the lections for this day. Distribute Bibles and copies of the [biblical background](#) material. Invite a volunteer to read the commentary on the focus passage. Discuss: What new thoughts come to you? What is surprising in this commentary? Then invite other volunteers to take turns reading **Psalm 104:24–34, 35b, Ezekiel 37:1–14, John 15:26–27, 16:4b–15, and Romans 8:22–27**, and the commentary for each passage. Discuss: In what ways does each passage relate to and help interpret the events of Pentecost?



## Bless

**Gather** again in the worship space and light the candle. Invite four volunteers to use a taper to light a tealight each and to place these around the edges of the circle of light, as you say: God’s Spirit brings new dreams...God’s Spirit brings new life...God’s Spirit brings love...God’s Spirit brings hope.

**Sing or listen to** “I’ve Got a Voice” (pp. 20–21 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Blessing** Invite participants to say the following blessing to each other: “God’s Spirit is given to you.”

## Reflect

How did this session help all ages celebrate the story of Pentecost? What worked well? What might you change for a future all ages session?



# God's Spirit

based on Acts 2:1–21

**Build the excitement in the story by speaking softly and slowly at the beginning. Build to a shout of "Listen!" when Peter quiets the crowd.**

Something unusual was in the air in Jerusalem that day. It wasn't the heat, the chirping birds, or the clip-clopping donkeys pulling squeaky carts of grain and fruit for the festival of Pentecost. An air of excitement hovered over the city, along with the sounds of the cooing doves and the bleating lambs on their way to the temple.

Jerusalem was always bustling on the day of Pentecost. People came from all over Judah to celebrate this festival. Sitting at a gate into the city or a marketplace provided an amazing sight. All sizes and shapes of people walked by. Mysterious languages touched your ears. Smells of exotic spices and herbs wafted before your nose.

The commotion of adults talking, along with children playing and laughing, gave a special joy to the day. As people travelled to Jerusalem, they sang praises to God to lighten their steps on the dusty roads. Their songs lingered in the air.

Peter and the rest of Jesus' followers had been in Jerusalem for many days. After the crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus had instructed them to wait in the city for a special gift, the Holy Spirit. Today they too were excited and eager to celebrate Pentecost.

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus' followers were all together. They spent much time praying together. Perhaps they were praying when it happened.

For suddenly, it was no ordinary day, not even an ordinary Pentecost day.

A breeze came into the room where they were. The breeze got stronger and sounded like the rush of a mighty wind, filling their ears and the room with its sound. It was like being outdoors in a windstorm. With the wind came what looked like tongues of fire, little flames. The flames danced over the head of each person in the room, but no one was burned.

When the wind and the flames disappeared, the people in the room found they could speak languages they had not spoken before. They found they could understand languages they had not understood before. This was the gift of God's Holy Spirit. This was the gift Jesus had promised them.

All this noise had attracted a crowd looking in the door. "They must be drunk," someone said. "And how can these people speak so many languages?" asked another. "Why, I hear that person speaking my language," said someone else.

Peter heard the people outside. "Listen, everyone!" he shouted above the din. Everyone, the people outside the room and the followers of Jesus inside the room, stopped talking.

"We are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning. Remember what the prophet Joel said!

God declared,

'I will pour out my Spirit upon everyone.  
Your daughters and sons will have words  
from me.

Old and young alike will dream marvellous  
dreams.'

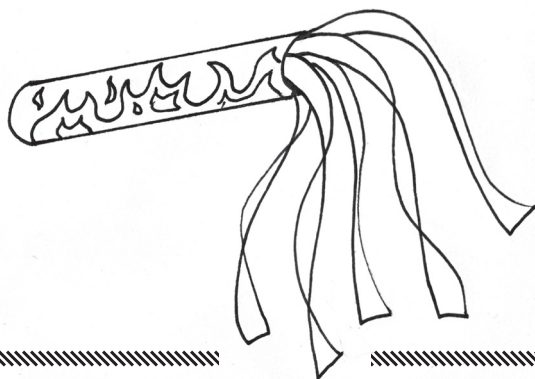
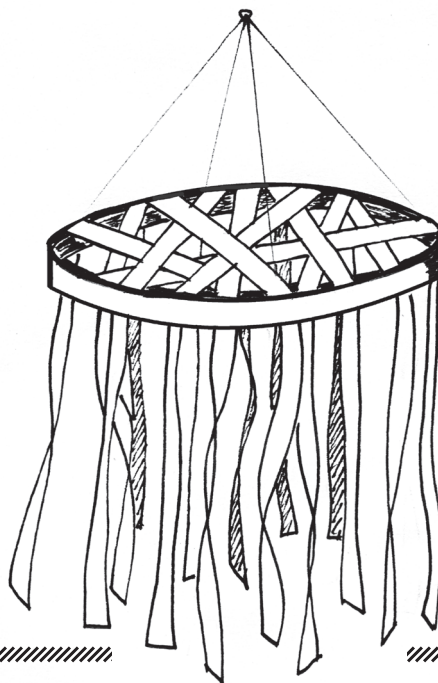
Peter's words, the words from God, astonished everyone, the people outside the room and the people inside the room. Peter told them about Jesus and the promise of the Holy Spirit. On that special, unusual Pentecost, three thousand people joined the followers of Jesus. Alleluia!



# Pentecost Activities

## Pentecost wind catchers

1. Cut crepe paper streamers or ribbon into 2.5 m/8 ft lengths (for large wind catchers) or 60 cm/2 ft lengths (for small wind catchers).
2. Place the inner ring of an embroidery hoop on a table and lay a variety of shades of streamers or ribbons across to form a web.
3. Place the outer ring of the hoop over the streamers/ribbons and around the inner hoop to secure.
4. Attach fishing line to form a hanger.



## Pentecost batons

1. Cut crepe paper streamers into 30 cm/12 in lengths and tape or staple several to one end of a cardboard tube.
2. Decorate the tube with drawings of flames.

## PENTECOST HAIKU POETRY

The first line of the poem has five syllables.

The second line has seven syllables.

The third line has five syllables.

*for example*

Day of Pentecost  
when all the people received  
the Holy Spirit