



PENTECOST SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHILDREN AT RISK • YOUTH • YOUNG ADULTS

Lesson Plan

Younger Children (K-4th Grade)

Objectives

Children will:

- Be able to place the story of Pentecost in context of the Biblical story (New Testament, after Jesus' death and resurrection).
- Learn about the ways that the Pentecost offering supports ministries for young people, and that the Pentecost offering is one of the four special offerings of our church.
- Start to connect God's teaching and care for us with our call to teach and help care for others.

Resources and supplies

- Bible or story Bible (with focus on scriptures of Psalm 71 and Acts 2:1-21)
- One 12-inch dowel or similar-length stick for each student
- One roll each of red, yellow and orange crepe-paper streamers
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Markers
- Red balloon, pom-pom or lightly inflated ball
- Decorations for the room to give it a festive feel—could include balloons, streamers, party hats, a 'Happy Birthday' banner, etc.
- *optional: Candle (wax or electric)

GATHER (15 minutes)

Opening Prayer

(Feel free to use the prayer below, a prayer that is part of your usual routine or any prayer of your choice.)

Loving God, prepare our hearts to receive your word. Prepare our minds to listen and wonder. Prepare our hands to create, and prepare our whole selves for this time of learning about you together. Amen.

Set the story by asking:

- I wonder if anyone knows what special day in the church today is? (Use context from your congregation—have your children been to worship yet? Does your congregation traditionally wear red? Have there been any visual cues that might indicate to the students that there is something different and/or special about today? If so, take some time to discuss these things . . .)
- Did anyone notice how our room is decorated? Why do you think there are party decorations around? (If there is a child in your class with a birthday around this time, wish them a happy birthday, and note what fun it must be to have a birthday around the same time as the Church's!)



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- Tell the class that we are celebrating Pentecost, often called “The Birthday of the Church.”

Read the Acts passage from a Children’s Bible or another retelling of the story (possible titles include the Pentecost story from *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Werheim, or the book, *The Day When God Made Church: A Child’s First Book About Pentecost*, by Rebekah McLeod Hutto, illustrated by Stephanie Haig)

- Ask the students what details from the story stood out to them. (Possible answers—the “tongues of fire,” the large number of people, the different languages and how people could understand each other . . .)
- Explain that Pentecost is sometimes described as “the Birthday of the Church” because it was on the day of Pentecost that the beginnings of the early church came to be. Some other things that are associated with Pentecost are symbols of the Holy Spirit (such as the dove and wind) as well as the color red to signify the flames.

EXPLORE (20 minutes)

The Offerings:

On special holidays in the life of the church, the Presbyterian Church encourages congregations to give gifts called “Special Offerings.” Ask the class if anyone can name some of these (give children a chance to guess what special holidays/celebrations those might be, and what the offerings support).

Share with the class that there are four of these “Special Offerings,” and one of them is today, an appropriate day to give gifts since it is the birthday of the Church:

1. Pentecost Offering—This offering is received at Pentecost—to benefit children and youth (Educate a Child, Presbyterian Youth Triennium, Young Adult Volunteer Program, as well as local child- and youth-related causes)
2. One Great Hour of Sharing—This offering is received in the seasons of Lent and Easter to support hunger, disaster relief and self-development ministries.
3. The Peacemaking Offering—This offering is received around the time of World Communion Sunday to support ministries of peace around the world.
4. The Christmas Joy Offering—This offering is received at Christmas time to support retired ministers and mission workers of the PC(USA).

Over the year, we will have the chance to learn more about all of these offerings and the ways that they help people around the world of many different ages and stages and needs. As we focus on the Pentecost offering today, consider these ‘wondering’ questions:

- Why do you think it was decided to focus on young people as the offering recipients? (Some answers could be: because it is important to help young people learn about God, because young people don’t always have the same opportunity as adults to be involved in the church, etc.)
- 40 percent of the Pentecost offering stays in local communities. Do you have ideas of programs in our community that help young people? Does our church do work to help young people that could benefit from these offerings? (*If possible, share how your church will use the 40 percent that will stay with your congregation.*)



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Connecting scriptures:

The Psalm reading that was chosen for this offering says, “You’ve taught me since my youth, God, and I’m still proclaiming your wondrous deeds!” (For better context, you may want to read beyond the focus verse 17—perhaps 14-18a.)

Ask the children:

- How does hearing that make you feel?
- What do you think are some of God’s wondrous deeds?

In the Acts text, which tells the story of Pentecost, the wondrous deeds of God are being proclaimed by people young and old in a variety of languages.

CREATE AND MOVE (20 minutes)

*(*A note about crafts: The ideas and suggestions here are a starting point—feel free to stray from them or adapt them to suit the needs of your learners and your own comfort level.)*

Activity #1—Creating streamers for worship

In preparation for worship on Pentecost, have the students create streamers to be waved during the service (work with worship leadership to come up with some appropriate times, which could include hymns or at specific points in the reading of the Acts text or Psalm. If your children have already been to worship, you can still use the activities on the story sheet to celebrate the story.)

- On streamers or ribbons, have the students write words from the Psalm or Acts text, or symbols or drawings (flames, birds, etc.). Some suggestions:
 - “Let us proclaim God’s wondrous deeds!”
 - “You have taught me since my youth!”
 - “From heaven came the sound like the rush of wind!”
 - “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.”
 - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
 - A quote from a Pentecost hymn that your congregation uses
- Each student should make three to five (or more) streamers, and then gather them up, wrapping the end around the top of a dowel, securing the streamers with masking tape.
- Use the story on the Younger Children Activity Sheet to recap the story in song, inviting the children to join in with the motions to go with the recap of each of the two scripture verses.

Activity #2—Lifting your spirits!

- Using a balloon (or lightly inflated ball, or large pom-pom if there are latex allergies in your class) introduce the game “lifting your spirits.”
 - Rules: Spread the students in a wide circle sitting with legs crossed. The teacher launches the balloon into the circle. The goal is to keep the balloon/ball in the air for as long as possible. When the balloon comes to you, you must tap the balloon in the air while saying a word associated with the story or the offering. Before playing, review the story as well as



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the recipients of the offering as a way of brainstorming words that the students might say as the balloon comes to them. Students could use their hands, heads, streamers, feet, elbows, etc. to tap the balloon/ball. Teachers could add or change how to tap ball/balloon as the game progresses to increase complexity.

CLOSE (5 minutes)

Close with a time of meditative prayer. If you would like, light a candle (either votive or electric).

Invite the children to close their eyes or lower their gaze so that they are not distracted by anything in the room. Ask them to take a few slow deep breaths, sharing that in the language of the New Testament, the word for breath is the same as the word for Spirit (pneuma).

- Invite them to take 30-60 seconds to quiet and still their bodies and notice their breath.
- Invite them to breath to the rhythm of the words of the Psalm (paraphrased below):
- Breathe in as I say: ***“God, you’ve taught me from my youth.”***
- Breathe out as I say: ***“and I tell of your wondrous deeds.”***
- Repeat four or more times, as feels appropriate, then tell the students that you will have a breath cycle of silence.
- After one breath cycle of silence, ask students to hold one thought from the lesson in their minds (it could be something associated with a child, youth or young adult who has or will benefit from the offering, a word from the story, a phrase on their streamer, or something else) and offer that thought to God.
- After what feels like an appropriate amount of time, invite the children to join you with the word, “Amen.”

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