

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Pentecost Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 14:8-17 (25-27)

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

In today's Gospel passage we find Jesus gently preparing his disciples for the coming of the Advocate who will continue the teaching Jesus has begun and reminding them of all they had done together. In today's passage from Acts the disciples are waiting huddled in the upper room fearing that the authorities would come and get them before the Advocate showed up. What might they have been expecting? Sure enough, God remains true to form: God is a surprise. What they get is a wind that blows into the room, chases away the cobwebs of fuzzy thinking, and fills the disciples with fire. How is that same wind blowing in our lives as we look at the work we have been given to do?

Theme: The wind of the Holy Spirit blows with us

Before: Many churches will focus on the Acts passage today as we celebrate Pentecost: the end of the Easter season, the beginning of the time the disciples were patched into the Holy Spirit. The story offered to you today fuses the Gospel to the Acts passage (Acts 2:1-21).

If you have had time to look at this lesson plan, and a small budget, consider buying pinwheels, even if only a couple, for the children to play with. They can also be made using the plastic folder covers available even in grocery stores or plain paper and pinning the shapes you cut to the eraser of a pencil (you would not want to send one of these home — the pin could pose a serious problem), or with a paper fastener to a straw. Check the Internet for patterns and instructions.

In addition to, or instead of, pinwheels, you could bring lengths of lightweight cloth (even pillow cases) or streamers to run with and catch the wind.

Rainy Day option: Bring a fan, hair dryer that will blow cold air, or a vaporizer. You will also need construction paper and scissors.

Beginning: Ask the children to describe wind to you. What does wind do? How does it feel on our faces? What does it do to our hair? Can we "see" the wind? How do we know it is there, if we cannot see it? Tell the children we have a story about wind today.

Praying: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, God, for sending the Holy Spirit - your wind we can feel. Amen.

The Story: Part of this story happened before Easter, and part of it happened after Easter. The before part is Jesus getting his friends ready to do their work. He is telling them that he is going to go back and be with God, but he will not leave them all alone. Hmm, Jesus is thinking. Hmm. How can I describe who is coming? How can I describe the Holy Spirit? If I tell them the Holy Spirit will come like a wind, they won't get it. I know. I will tell them the Holy Spirit is going to come and be their friend. A friend who will stand up for them, help them get things done. And that is the truth. So, don't be afraid, he tells his friends. You are going to have a new friend.

After Jesus was crucified and after he was resurrected and after Jesus went back to be with God, Jesus' friends were scared even though Jesus told them not to be afraid. And so they stayed in their room and did not go outside. They were all sitting there trying not to be afraid when suddenly a wind came rushing into the room. Fresh air! Lots of energy! They started talking loudly to each other and they discovered they could speak all kinds of languages they didn't even know they knew! They were so excited that they said it looked like they had flames bouncing off their heads. So this was their new friend, the Holy Spirit!

Activity: If at all possible, go outside to a place where the children can run freely and safely. If you have brought pinwheels, let them do relay races with the pinwheels. Tell them to run until they can feel the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing in their hair, on their faces, on their arms and legs. If you do not have pinwheels, the lengths of cloth can become windsocks.

Invite the children to come up with a wind dance. Show, with their bodies, what the wind would look like, if we could see the wind.

Rainy Day Option: Cut little people out of construction paper. Using the fan, hair dryer, or vaporizer, let the paper people blow in the wind, dance in the wind. Then invite the children to clear a space in the classroom and run with their streamers, pinwheels, or fabric (show them how to take each running step touching heel and toe on the ground with each step so the running does not get too frantic).

Getting Closure: Gather the children in a circle giving them time to calm down from all the running around. Tell them they can make their own wind anytime they want to by simply waving their hands back and forth in front of their faces. Tell them that will help them remember that the Holy Spirit is right here with us even when we do not feel the wind blowing.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for sending us the Holy Spirit to help us do the work we have to do. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Pentecost Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 14:8-17 (25-27)

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Theme: The wind of the Holy Spirit blows with us

Before Class: If you are privileged to have people in your church who speak another language, ask them for these opening sentences at the Eucharist in their language. Here they are in English, French, and Spanish.

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Le Seigneur soit avec vous. Et avec ton esprit.

El Señor sea con ustedes. Y con tu espíritu.

Make sufficient copies of the translations so that each child has one, even if several children have the same translation.

If you are doing the “streamer” activity in the Getting Closure section, you will need white streamers (crepe paper, strips of white fabric, or adding machine tape will work great), markers, tape, and a pencil or other object onto which they can tape their streamer.

Beginning: Ask the children to tell you how they would describe the wind. If we cannot see it, how do we know it is there? Wind can cause weather problems yet wind can be beneficial. Can they think of times it is a big help? (Blowing the ice off our roads and sidewalks, bringing a

breeze to a hot day, powering wind mills that make electricity, etc.) Tell them we have a story today about a different kind of wind.

Opening Prayer: Thank you Jesus, for sending the Holy Spirit to blow in our lives so we may feel your presence. Amen.

The Story: John 14: 8-17, 25-27 One way to approach this story is to ask the children to find Acts 2: 1-21 in their Bibles, place a bookmark at that passage, and then find John 14. Ask for three different readers to read verses 25, 26 and 27. Keeping the Bible open, ask the children what they have heard, guiding their discussion with these questions:

What does Jesus say the Advocate, or Counselor, or the Holy Spirit will do? (Verse 25: help them remember all that Jesus has taught them and help them continue to learn.)

What does Jesus say about being afraid? (Things will scare us, but we don't need to BE afraid because of the peace that Jesus gives to us.)

Acts 2: 1 – 12: This is a long passage and has such difficult words to pronounce, invite the children to follow along with you in their Bibles as you read it. Stop regularly to be sure the children understand what they are hearing.

Questions:

After verse 1: What would the Day of Pentecost have meant to these disciples? (Pentecost was 50 days after the Passover in Jewish tradition — maybe they noticed that it has been 50 days since the Resurrection.)

After verse 4: Ask the children if they can think of a time they were with a group of people and suddenly someone gets a great idea and everyone gets excited at the idea? Have they ever seen a cartoon figure with a light bulb over their head to signify they had just had a great idea? How might that compare with the image of the “divided tongues of fire” the disciples saw?

After verse 11: If you think the children in your class have had experiences of being with people of another culture, ask them if they have ever been with people who were speaking a different language, but could still figure out what they were talking about? And if you do not think they could answer that, offer an experience of your own or a situation that you can express. (For example, a group of people who speak different languages all snuggling with an adorable puppy) Have they ever listened to music they did not “understand” but that they liked anyway?

Ask the children to offer things they know work — but they cannot explain how they work. You might say that you know your computer works, but you could not describe how it works, or how aspirin makes your headache go away. What else do we know is true that we cannot exactly explain?

Invite the children to put into their own words what Jesus is saying here. Offer to scribe what they come up with.

Activity: YouTube Video. Of course, there was not internet at the time of the first Pentecost, but we can pretend. Give each child one of the translations, help them to pronounce the words on their sheet. Make sure that at least two children have a copy of each translation. Invite the children to stand around in a circle, reading their translation simultaneously.

Ask for a volunteer to be a reporter covering the scene who will interview the children. The volunteer may want to ask them how come they can speak in a language no one knew they knew, what happened in that room, etc.

Getting Closure: Suggest to the children that they be on the lookout for times the Holy Spirit blows into their lives when it sneaks up on them, and helps them do something hard. Sometimes we only notice afterwards.

If you have time, you can have them write or draw these stories on to streamers that can then blow in the wind. Give each child a long piece of streamer, markers, and a pencil (to tape the streamer on to so they can hold it up in the wind.) Once they have created their streamer, tape it on to the pencil and if you have time, go outside and see them blowing in the wind!

If you do not have time to create the streamers, tell them they can tell us about it next week, if they want, but the important thing is to notice, enjoy, and be grateful.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for sending the Holy Spirit to help us and as we leave this place, help us remember to look for the Holy Spirit throughout our lives. Amen.

John 14: 8-17

8 Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’⁹Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

¹⁵‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

²⁵‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you.²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Acts 2:1-21 (Optional)

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’ ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ ¹³ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Pentecost Sunday
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 14:8-17 (25-27)

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Theme: The wind of the Holy Spirit blows with us

Before Class: You will need sufficient Bibles for each person to follow along or copies of the scripture passage. There is more material in this lesson than you may have time to cover so make some choices before you begin. You may choose to use the lesson as outlined or complete the Gospel portion before going to the Acts passage. (Please note: there is also an Intergenerational Lesson Plan for today.)

Beginning: Today, as we celebrate Pentecost, we will look at the before (the Gospel for today) the after (the Acts passage) resurrection stories. In some places Pentecost is called Whitsunday or the Birthday of the Church.

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for being the God of Surprise — ever blowing fresh wind into our lives so that we may see you anew. Amen.

The Scriptures: If time is limited, skip the first Optional section and go directly to the Gospel readings (John 14: 8-17, 25-27).

Optional Study: "After:" Pentecost: Acts 2:1-21.

Acts: 2: 1-4: Invite someone to read these first four verses.

Questions: Remind the group of the setting: The disciples are trying to carry on, they have cast lots for the replacement of Judas, but they are huddled in this closed room — in fear of their lives. Possibly they are feeling all the more guilty because Jesus had told them on so many occasions not to be afraid!

Something totally unexpected happens. Luke struggles for words. If we were to paraphrase what happened, what would we say? (Work with your group to come up with "non-churchy" words to paraphrase what happened.)

What caused crowds to gather? (Verse 4)

Acts 2: 5-13 Read this passage and then discuss.

Questions:

What astounding things did the crowds hear? (Verse 6)

Do you think the disciples suddenly learned all these new languages (possibly) or that the power of what they were saying communicated across language (possibly) or something else entirely (possibly.)

What did the skeptics say? (Verse 13)

Acts 2: 14-21 Read this passage and then discuss.

Notice the contrast between verse 1 and verse 14. (Huddled in the room in fear as opposed to standing together testifying to the people.)

The Scripture: John 14: 8-17: (Focus on the Gospel passage if time is limited.) Invite someone to read the passage. Explain that this passage comes near the end of Jesus' training of his disciples.

Questions:

What is the key concept in this passage — a concept Jesus has been teaching over and over and yet they still do not "get?" (oneness — not duality).

John writes using beautiful, but abstractly complex, words. If we were trying to get this concept across to a friend, how would we phrase this concept of God in Jesus and Jesus in God? (Grapple with the concept including the difficulties in getting it down in so many words.)

What "greater works" do you suppose Jesus had in mind that we could do — after he returned to the Father? (The concept of hospitals came from Christians, for example. How about works of art and music? What else can we think of?)

What might be involved "If you in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it?" (If this does not mean Jesus gives us any little thing our heart's desire, discuss what alignment might first be necessary.)

What is the sign that Jesus says indicates we do love him? (Verse 15)

Next Sunday is Trinity Sunday when we celebrate God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 16-17 as a "Preview of Coming Attractions." Discuss the attributes of the Holy Spirit that Jesus describes in these two verses.

John 14: 25-27: Invite one person to read the passage while the rest follow along in their Bibles or simply listen with their eyes closed. Allow a minute or two for silent reflection. If time permits, ask another person to read the passage again. Ask the group what words or ideas appeared to them. Allow sufficient time for people to articulate their thoughts. If they need some assistance, here are a couple of questions:

What might the disciples have thought on hearing Jesus say "while I am still with you?" (Perhaps Jesus picked up on their anxiety with what he says next.)

What will be the mission of the "Advocate" Jesus says the Father will send? (teach and remind)

How does it make us feel to hear Jesus say to us — through this Scripture: do not let your hearts be troubled, do not let them be afraid?"

Getting Closure: A powerful wind blew through the lives of the disciples, a wind that stayed in them during awesomely difficult times. That wind, the Holy Spirit, is still here for us. The Holy Spirit, Advocate, and Counselor, will teach us all things. What helps us notice the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How can we encourage each other to "blow with the wind?"

Closing Prayer: *Collect for Pentecost*

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

John 14: 8-17

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