

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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