



Ecumenical Bible Week 2023 Resource for Youth Ministers/Teachers/Chaplains, etc.

Ecumenical Bible Week is an exciting and successful venture which is now in its tenth year. It includes parish-based events around Dublin and surrounding areas.

For 2023, our topic will be “Planting seeds for hope together in a post-covid reality”.

There’ll be debate, talks, music and (we hope) lots of participation.

For more information visit www.bibleweek.ie

We encourage you to use this suggested resource with students, youth groups, etc. either in the lead up to or during Ecumenical Bible Week.

Feel free to adapt, adopt, change and bring your own creativity to it!

Focus from the Bible: Acts 2:1-13 – The Pentecost story

Bottom Line: We experience Pentecost every day when the Spirit lives in us and when we use our gifts and talents to help others!

SUPPLIES

- Red stickers or tape (*you will need a lot of these depending on the size of your group*)
- Red, orange, white and yellow construction paper
- Sharpie markers
- Double-sided sticky tape
- Scissors for each young person

A Note to Leaders:

This lesson can be a very powerful experience for your students as we talk about the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. The prayer with this lesson is that the students will experience that same Holy Spirit today, so please spend time in prayer and personal reflection before this lesson.

Think about how you first experienced the Holy Spirit. Bring your own experience into it. Maybe your last experience of the Holy Spirit was your own Confirmation. Whatever it was don't be ashamed, but know that this lesson is for you. Through your work, your vocation be sure and trust that the Holy Spirit works through you. You are and continue to be and inspiration to others!

Our prayer is that you will experience the Holy Spirit of Christ today even as you prepare. And to the seasoned youth minister/teacher/chaplain: It can be easy at times to lose that fire. Today is for you. May you remember that fire that led you into your vocation and may it continue inspire you today. Remember, be open to and share how Christ and the Holy Spirit have moved in your life, the lives of your students and the lives of others.

For a bit of background

You can read the article <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/what-is-pentecost-why-does-it-matter/> to get a bit of background about what Pentecost is, the meaning of the word, and history.

Determine whether your group would be interested in the history of the word “Pentecost” which simply means “fifty” and also the tie into the Old Testament Festival of Weeks.

Some groups will enjoy the history, but for youth groups with younger students, etc. this would possibly bog them down from really delving into the activity of the Holy Spirit which is really the main point of the lesson.

OPENING GAME – Fire

- Choose one person to be the “Fire Starter” and give them a large supply of red stickers.
- Also, set up a ‘Fire Station’ where more of the red fire stickers are located when the Fire Starter or the students who get stickers placed on them.
- The Fire Starter will begin in the centre with the rest of the students in a circle around the Fire Starter.

- When you say “Go”, everyone can run and spread out in the designated area, while the Fire Starter runs and tries to stick a red ‘Fire’ sticker on people.
- Once a person has had a Fire sticker put on them, they can run to the Fire Station to get Fire stickers to help the Fire Starter.
- The game is over when everyone has been tagged with a Fire Sticker.

If your group is a smaller group, this will go quickly unless the students are very creative about where they hide, so you can play the game more times choosing a different Fire Starter.

TEACH – Pentecost

Say: We all know that playing with fire can be a very dangerous thing. Can you remember the first time that you realized just how quickly fire could spread? *(Be aware and sensitive to any tragedies that students may have experienced because of fire!!)*

Give the students time to share. Also, feel free to share a wise or unwise experience that you had with fire as a teenager, but be sure to remind them not to follow in your footsteps.

Yes, fire can be very scary, but it is also the one thing that can save you when you are trying to survive. You know – like watching Survivor or a Bear Grylls programme when they are left with no food and fending for themselves: fire is critical.

Today, we are going to be talking about fire, but a different kind of fire.

Can anyone here tell me what “Pentecost” is about? The word Pentecost literally means “fifty”. In the Bible, we read about a time when the Jews were gathered in Jerusalem fifty days after the Passover for the Festival of Weeks.

This is where you can use the information from the article above if your group would find this interesting or direct them to the site to read later.

Long story short, there were Jews from all over gathered and something amazing happened...

Remember that at this time, Jesus had died, risen, hung out for 40 days and then went to Heaven.

Yes, it was 50 days after the Passover. And something amazing was about to happen. So imagine that you are in this scripture. You are in the room. Close your eyes.

Think about where you might be from....maybe you don’t speak the language but you are here to celebrate. As I read this scripture, I want you to use all of your senses.

What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel?

Read Acts 2:1-13.

Open your eyes. What did you see? Hear? Feel? What just happened??

Give students time to talk about what they experienced and felt.

Pentecost by many is called the “Birthday of the Church” because the Holy Spirit came on the apostles and all of those gathered from many different places. Why would it be a big deal that these different places were gathered?

Let the students give their ‘theories’.

Up until this point, the good news of Jesus had been kept really close. But at this time, all of these people were gathered from all over in Jerusalem. Just imagine when you left this place after the Holy Spirit literally coming over you like fire.

You go back home. Nothing is the same because you are not the same.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote in his journal these words *“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation;*

and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

The Holy Spirit is the very spirit of Jesus, and Jesus promised that his Spirit would come and is available to all of us. And when this Spirit comes, amazing things happen. People are changed. Just think about Peter. Remember the one who denied Jesus three times and then the rooster crowed? The one who walked out to Jesus on the water, but then got scared and began to sink.

Now, can I have a volunteer who would like to act out the part of the disciple, Peter?

Read Acts 2:14-31

Choose a volunteer who you know will read the scripture in a meaningful way for the group.

Close by lighting a candle in the middle of the room to symbolise the Holy Spirit amongst us with a prayer such as:

Jesus, we are gathered here today, in a simple room.
Fill us with your spirit.
Empower us to be changed.
To be on fire for you.
Give us the courage,
To be lit by the fire of your love,
And to be the flame of your love for others. Amen.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How was Peter changed from before Jesus' death to now at Pentecost in his amazing speech?
- Share about what you experienced while reading the Pentecost scripture.
- How do you think your life would have changed if you had been there?
- Share about a time when you sensed that the Holy Spirit was at work.
- Are we thankful for our own gifts and talents?
- What are gifts have you been given that could – “Make a difference”? How?

Challenge the group to choose a colour of construction paper, cut out a flame, and using a sharpie to write out a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come. *It could be a simple prayer such as “Come Holy Spirit”*

Then on the back get them to write down one gift they have and one way they could use it to make this world, their community, their family a better place for all.

Then have each student get a piece of double stick tape and tape up their flame around the room as a visible reminder that the Holy Spirit is at work, that they are gifted and that they can be the one to make a difference!!

Give them the **EBW Youth prayer card** to take away with them (*maybe give them a few each and ask them to spread them amongst their friends*) and to finish encourage them to go out now, thankful for the gifts and talents they have, aware of the Holy Spirit who gives them courage and to make a difference, being the Good News of God's love to others.



Thank you, Lord, for all that you have given to me and thank you for revealing yourself to me through the scriptures.
In this Pentecost time, make of us seeds of hope. Nourish us with Your Word that we may grow each day as followers of Your Son and bring a harvest of peace, love and joy to all we meet.
In the name of Jesus Your Son, our Lord.

Amen

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