**Messy Church – May 2020 – The Early Church – starting at Pentecost**

We are going to look at what happened to Jesus’ friends after his ascension – which is where we finished last time. The stories start at Pentecost, 10 days after Ascension.

We have put the stories with the activities, except for the first one, which appears in the celebration.

The stories are:

1. Pentecost
2. Man at the Beautiful Gate
3. Peter and John at the Sanhedrin
4. Appointment of deacons
5. Paul on the road to Damascus
6. Peter and the unclean food

**Stories and Activities**

1. **Pentecost**

**Flame headdress:**

You will need: card in flame colours (red, orange, yellow), stapler with staples, or glue, scissors

Cut a band from the card that will go round your head, and staple or glue the ends together. From more of the card, cut flame shapes, and staple or glue these around the band, so that it looks like flames sitting on your head.

**Windmill:**

You will need: sheet of paper, cut to a square, coin (either a 10p or 2p piece), scissors, drawing pin, pencil, a piece of wood about a foot long. (Garden canes work, but they are very hard to get a drawing pin into)

Fold the square of paper diagonally both ways and unfold again. Put the coin over the point where the two folds cross and draw round it. Cut down each of the fold lines to the pencil line in the middle. Fold alternate points to overlap the middle point and each other (don’t press the folds down). Put the drawing pin through the all of the layers and the middle point, and into the piece of wood, at one end. Take your windmill outside and see it whirl round!

**Power of the wind:**

Next time you are outside stand with your face into the wind, and then stand with your back to the wind – see how it feels different. If you have long hair, see how it blows round your face.

If you have a kite, try flying it!

*Tell the story*

See the YouTube version in the Celebration

Acts of the Apostles 2, verses 1 to 13

1. **Man at the Beautiful Gate, at the Temple**

You will need: print out of the puppet parts (if you can print on card, the puppet will be sturdier), colouring pencils, thread (heavy duty button thread, or crochet cotton would be best, but ordinary sewing thread will do, especially on ordinary paper), needle to suit thread, fasteners, scissors

Cut out the parts and colour them. Join the parts as shown in the diagram. When you pull the long thread, the puppets arms and legs will jump.

*Tell the story*

Peter and John went to pray at the Temple in Jerusalem. As they were going in through the Beautiful Gate, a beggar asked them for money. They didn’t have any to give him, but Peter said “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”. Then he helped the man get up, and he walked and jumped into the Temple with them, praising God.

Acts of the Apostles 3, verses 1 to 10

1. **Peter and John at the Sanhedrin**

Have you ever tried something, just to see if it will work?

1. Put some bicarbonate of soda on a saucer and drip some vinegar on it. Tell us what happens!
2. Write a message on a piece of paper, with lemon juice. Ask your mother or father to heat it up – a hair dryer , or if that is not hot enough put the paper in the cooker or under the grill (we used to hold the paper over a candle flame, so it doesn’t need to be very hot). See what happens then, and when it gets cold again.

*Tell the story*

After Peter and John healed the man at the Beautiful Gate, and other people, the leaders of the friends of Jesus, now called the Apostles, were arrested and put in prison. Overnight, an angel of God let them out and told them to go and teach the way of Jesus in the Temple. The Temple guards found them there, and brought them to talk to the Jewish ruling council about what had happened.

The Council wanted to stop them talking about Jesus, but Peter said that doing what God wanted was more important than doing what men wanted, He told them that the apostles were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, and some members of the council wanted to kill them. However, one of the council, called Gameliel, had the apostles taken out of the room, so he could talk to the council without them hearing.

He reminded the council that previous claims to be the Messiah had died out after their leader had been killed, so they only needed to leave this one to disappear. If it didn’t, Gameliel said, it would be evidence that the whole movement came from God, and it would be pointless to oppose it. The council agreed to his proposal, had the apostles beaten, told them not to teach the way of Jesus any more and let them go.

The apostles went on teaching about Jesus!

Acts of the Apostles 5, verses 17 to 42

1. **The appointment of deacons**
2. Write a list of people who help you, or who helps someone else you know – a grandparent or a friend.
3. Help to get the lunch or tea ready.

*Tell the story*

As the number of disciples – followers of Jesus – kept on growing, there was an argument. The Greek-speaking disciples said that the Greek-speaking widows were getting left out or getting less as money to buy food was given out, while the Aramaic-speaking widows were getting more.

The Apostles knew that their job was to teach the way of Jesus, not run the money side of the organisation. They decided that they would have to find people who were good at this sort of thing. They called all the believers together, and told them to choose seven men from the group, who were known to be faithful to the way of Jesus, and were prepared to be guided by God, who could be in charge of the money, and make sure everything was done properly. They would also make sure that arguments were properly investigated and sorted out and that everyone who needed help got it.

So the group chose seven men – Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus.

Acts of the Apostles 6, verses 1 to 6

1. **Paul on the road to Damascus**

When you are for a walk, or in your garden, on a sunny day, look at your shadow. See how it moves with you. If the sun is really bright, you might be able to make shadow animals with your hands – or you could do this inside, with someone holding a torch for you.

Don’t look at the sun directly, even through sunglasses, it will hurt your eyes. Hold your hands over your eyes, and see how bright the sun looks between your fingers. Saul (later called Paul) was blinded for three days by a light as bright as the sun.

*Tell the story*

Saul was not in favour of the way of Jesus, and was determined to stop the followers, no matter what Gamaliel said. When he heard there were followers in Damascus, he got letters from the Temple authorities to the Jewish authorities in Damascus, saying he could arrest followers of the way. As he and the people with him got close to Damascus, suddenly he saw a really bright light, like the sun, shining on him. It dazzled him so much he fell over. Then he heard a voice in the light.

It said “Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?” Saul said “Who are you?” and the voice said “I am Jesus, who you are harassing. Go into the city, and do what you are told.”

The men with Saul heard the voice, but they didn’t see anything. They helped Saul get up and took him into Damascus, and found somewhere for him to stay, because he couldn’t see anything. Three days later, a follower of the way of Jesus, called Ananias, had a vision of Jesus telling him to go to Saul and heal him, because Saul had seen the vision of this happening. Ananias was worried, because he had heard what Saul was like, and what he wanted to do, but God said that it would be all right, Saul had changed, and God wanted him to be a follower also, and that he would be a great teacher of the way. So Ananias went and healed Saul, who was then baptised as a follower of the way of Jesus.

Acts of the Apostles 9, verses 1 to 19

1. **Peter and the unclean food**

You will need: a print out of the Roman soldier, crayons or felt tip pens, scissors, tin foil, glue

Colour in the figure. The plume on his helmet would have been red. Stick tin foil on his armour and his shield.

*Tell the story*

Is there food you don’t like? Or that you are not allowed to eat because you are allergic to it? Or not allowed to eat because your parents don’t think it is good for you?

Jews are not allowed to eat some food – like pork – so Peter had never eaten a pork sausage, or any bacon. Jews did not, and do not, keep pigs, for this reason. If you want to know the details of what animals, birds and fish Jews couldn’t eat, look up chapter 11 of the book of Leviticus, in the Old Testament.

One day, Peter had gone from Jerusalem to visit followers of the way of Jesus who were in other towns. He had gone to Joppa and healed a lady called Tabitha, and stayed for several days.

Meanwhile, in Caesarea, one of the officers of the Roman garrison was having a vision. This man was called Cornelius, and although he was not Jewish, he was very kind to the local Jewish people, and he prayed to God, even though the Jewish authorities would not have let him in the synagogue or the Temple. In the vision he saw an angel, who told him to send some of his men to Joppa to fetch a man called Peter, who would help him.

Peter was on the roof of the house where he was staying, saying his prayers while he waited for his lunch to be ready. He was hungry, and he had a vision, too. He thought he saw a big sheet being lowered out of the sky and spread out in front of him, covered with all sorts of food that he was not allowed to eat! Then he heard a voice from the sky which told him to kill and eat one of the animals. Peter was horrified, and said that he had never eaten anything that he wasn’t allowed to eat! The voice told him not to consider anything not allowed that God had said was all right. This was repeated three times, and then the sheet disappeared again.

While Peter was thinking about what this might mean, the soldiers from Caesarea arrived at the front door. The voice said to Peter, “These people have come to find you. I have sent them, so you can go with them.” So Peter went downstairs and said that he was the man they were looking for, and what did they want. They said that they wanted him to go to Caesarea, but it was more than a day’s journey, so they set out the following morning – Peter and his friends, and the soldiers.

At Caesarea, Peter went to Cornelius’ house, and there they explained both sides of what had happened – Peter’s view to Cornelius, and Cornelius’ view to Peter. Peter’s view included the understanding that God was telling him that the way of Jesus was not just for Jews, but for anyone who really wanted to follow.

He went on to explain what Jesus had said and done in his earthly lifetime to Cornelius and his household, and while he was speaking about Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to Cornelius and the rest of the household. The Jews who had come with Peter were amazed, because they hadn’t understood about anyone outside the Jewish faith being acceptable to God.

Everyone who received the Holy Spirit on that day was baptised with water. When Peter went back to Jerusalem, he had to explain the whole thing again to the Church there. This story is so important to the Church that it is told three times!

Acts of the Apostles 10 and 11, up to verse 18

Celebration

This month the Celebration focuses on Pentecost. It’s a little bit early, because Pentecost isn’t until 31st May, but as it comes between two Messy Church dates, in the middle, we thought we’d look at it this month, so that when the date arrives, you know more of what it’s about, and so most of our songs are about the Holy Spirit.

The first is: Spirit of God, unseen as the wind.

<https://youtu.be/dy8AZ46GKqc>

This is sung to the tune of the Skye Boat song.

I didn’t write the story out this month. However, it tells about Jesus visiting the disciples after that first Easter. You may remember this from last month’s story. This month we move on, because, after forty days, Jesus told the disciples that he had to go back to heaven. They went out with him to a hill, and he went up, and disappeared from them. He had told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait for a special helper.

They waited for ten more days, and on the day of Pentecost (originally a Jewish celebration of the barley harvest) they heard the sound of a rushing wind, and tongues of flame came down. The Holy Spirit came to them and Peter led them out to tell everyone in Jerusalem about Jesus.

Watch the video, which this month comes with pictures

<https://youtu.be/RfAhKq8iYwA>

Another song which people may enjoy is Colours of Day.

<https://youtu.be/Fo-3lf08y-Y>

Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit as a helper and also as a comforter and a friend. I’m finding it is not easy when I can’t actually meet my friends, although I can see them with Facebook and Zoom. Think about your friends, and then we’ll say a prayer

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit to be our helper and friend. Take care of us, and our friends, so that we can play together again when it is safe.

Amen

Peter spoke to the crowd, and they heard in in lots of different languages. Last Sunday our preacher finished our service (on Zoom) with this song, which a lot of people are singing in different languages.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

<https://youtu.be/YUxZpLm5Sa0>

Enjoy our celebration.

Then have tea or a treat if it isn’t tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don’t want shared, just tell me. I’ll only share the one’s you’re happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>