**Messy Church – 20th May 2023**

**Ascension and Pentecost**

The activities are:

1. **Ascension –** Acts chapter 1 verses 6 to 11

Ascension spiral (in the celebration)

1. **Pentecost – the wind –** Acts chapter 2 verses 1 and 2
   1. Windsock (in the celebration)
   2. Boats on the move
2. **Pentecost – the flames –** Acts chapter 2 verses 3 and 4
   1. Fire splatter painting
3. **Fruits of the Spirit –** Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23
   1. Pompom apples
   2. Fruit flan
4. **Birthday of the Church**
   1. Individual birthday cakes

**Stories and Activities**

**1. Ascension:** Acts chapter 1 verses 6 to 11

Jesus had been meeting his friends on and off for about five weeks, since his resurrection on Easter Sunday. He had been warning them that this would not go on for ever, and finally, he took them out of Jerusalem, talking about spreading the good news about him all over the world, starting with Jerusalem, after the Holy Spirit came to them. When they got to the top of the Mount of Olives, they were standing talking, and suddenly a cloud swept across the hill-top. When it cleared away, Jesus was not there. The friends looked around, still no Jesus. But two men in white were there. They asked the friends why they were looking for Jesus, and said that Jesus would eventually come back the same way he went, but that now he was in heaven. The friends went back to Jerusalem, to wait for the Holy Spirit.

**Ascension spiral (in the celebration)**

**You will need:**  a paper plate, crayons, felt tip pens or coloured pencils, cotton wool balls, glue, scissors, thread of some kind, a hole punch

Put the plate on your work surface, upside down (it’s easier to draw on the back of the plate!). Starting in the centre of the plate, draw a spiral to the outside rim (see the first diagram). Using felt-tip pens, coloured pencils or crayons, write the words “Jesus went up into heaven” along the spiral.

Cut out the spiral, punch a hole in the end at the rim, and loop in a piece of thread, to hang up the plate (2nd diagram). Glue cotton wool balls to the ends of the spiral, to make clouds.

**Talk about:** waiting for something exciting to happen, or not understanding what is going on.

**2 Pentecost: the wind –** Acts chapter 2 verses 1 and 2

Ten days after Jesus went to heaven was the Jewish festival of Pentecost. The friends of Jesus were still staying in Jerusalem, all together. Suddenly, they heard a noise like a gust of wind. It seemed to blow right through the house where they were. Then they seemed to see flames, touching each one of them. Then they were amazed to discover that they appeared to be able to talk in languages they didn’t know they knew.

1. **Windsock (in the celebration)**

**You will need:** tissue paper, two pipe-cleaners, scissors, glue, string

Cut one of the pipe-cleaners in half, and make the full size one and one half into circles. Tie three lengths of string (about a foot/30 cm long) to the large circle, spread out around it. Make a length (about 8 inches/20 cm) of tissue paper into a tube narrower at one end than the other. The wide end should be long enough to go round the large pipe-cleaner circle, and the narrow end round the small circle. Stick the tissue paper to the circles (work carefully around the strings). Stick streamers of tissue paper to the small end, and tie the windsock to a tree branch or fence post (or hold it out of the window – carefully!). Watch it blow.

1. **Boats on the move**

**You will need:** two pieces of paper or card, pencils, pens or crayons, scissors.

Hold one piece of paper sideways – the long sides at top and bottom. About ½ an inch (1 cm) in from each end, and 1 ½ inches (4 cm) up from the bottom of the page, draw two vertical lines, about 4 inches (10 cm) long, and cut along the lines carefully. Draw a scene on the paper so that it looks as if there is a river, lake or sea where the slots are, with sky above. Cut a strip from the second piece of paper which is fractionally narrower that the length of the slits (if you cut exactly the same size, it will not slide easily) and the full length of the paper. Thread it through the slits so that the ends of the paper are at the back of the picture on each side. Draw sailing boats on the strip, and move it backwards and forwards, as if the wind were blowing the boats along.

**Talk about:** how you know it is windy. Can you tell where the wind comes from, or where it is going? Talk about the damage wind can do, and how some plants need the wind to help scatter their seeds.

**3 Pentecost: the flames –** Acts chapter 2 verses 3 and 4

This bit of the story is with the story of the wind – just a line each, but different experiences.

**You will need:** dark paper to paint on, paint in flame colours.(red, orange, yellow, blue if you want to be complicated), paint brushes and water to keep them clean (and to wash you!), a pallet or tray to put the paint on, something to cover you to protect your clothing, and something to protect the surface under your paper.

Put paint of various colours in your pallet or tray. (You can experiment with different thicknesses of paint if you want.) Dip the brush into a colour, and flick it across the paper, or run your fingers across the bristles of the brush so that the paint sprays across the paper. Rinse the brush, and repeat with another colour, until you are happy with your fire picture.

**Talk about:** fire. Think about where it might be safe to have a fire, and where not. Some trees need their seeds to have been heated before they can grow into new trees, but people are scared of fire, so they try not to let wild fires happen.

**4. Fruits of the Spirit –** Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23

As the church grew, it spread to places that had never heard of Jesus, and to people who didn’t know anything of the background that Jewish people had about God and the Messiah. Christians like Paul, and Peter, had to find ways to explain the Holy Spirit and the difference it could make to life, as well as explaining that God loves everyone.

One of the most famous descriptions of what the Holy Spirit could do is this one, from Paul’s letter to the churches in the Roman province of Galatia. Paul describes the results of the Holy Spirit on a person as if the results were fruit on a tree – love, joy, gentleness, kindness, self-control. All these things are easier to develop, Paul says, with the help of the Holy Spirit, than by working at them on your own.

1. **Pompom apples**

**You will need:** pompom makers, yarn in red, green, yellow (apple colours), sharp pointed scissors, a short pipe-cleaner – brown if you have it.

Make a pompon in the usual way until you have cut and tied it. Before you take the pompom makers off, put the pipe-cleaner around it, over the tied thread, and twist the ends together. Remove the pompom makers and fluff out the yarn, to make an apple with the stalk showing at the top.

1. **Fruit flan**

**You will need:** a fruit flan case, a tin of fruit cocktail, a pack of quick jel, a plate to put the flan on, a tin opener (unless the tin has a ring-pull), a bowl to pour the juice into, a bowl to make the quick jel, a spoon, (and whatever ingredients and implements you need to make up the quick jel. If your quick jel requires using a cooker and saucepan, please ask an adult to help.)

Put the flan case onto the plate. Open the tin of fruit, but don’t take the lid completely off. Carefully pour the juice from the tin into an empty bowl, using the lid of the tin to hold the fruit in. Spoon the fruit into the flan case, carefully. Look at the different kinds of fruit there are. Make up the quick jel according to the instructions, and spoon it over the flan and the fruit.

**Talk about:** the various fruits of the spirit that Paul lists – how easy is it to be patient, or loving, or kind. Think about the different fruits you like to eat, or that are in the flan.

**5. Birthday of the Church**

When Pentecost came – which was about ten days after Jesus had gone to heaven – Jerusalem was still crowded with visitors. Pentecost was the Jewish feast that happened fifty days after Passover, so fifty days after Easter, for us. People who had travelled a long way to be in Jerusalem for Passover might well have decided not to go away again before Pentecost, and have two festivals in one holiday. And, of course, lots of people lived in Jerusalem anyway. When the people heard the noise of the wind, and the friends of Jesus rushing out of the house, all talking at once, they came to see what the commotion was. What they found was a bunch of men all talking different languages – languages they could understand, their home languages!

The first thing all these people thought when they heard the disciples, and hadn’t noticed that they could understand them, was that the men were drunk. When Peter realised that they were thinking that, he started to tell them what was going on – we call it, today, Peter’s first sermon. When he had explained about Jesus, people started asking what they should do next, if this was what had really happened at Easter. In the end, more than 3000 people were baptised that day, saying that they wanted to follow Jesus, even though they could no longer see him.

That is why Pentecost has been called the “Birthday of the Church”.

**You will need:** small cakes (home made or bought), icing (again, home made or bought), a candle holder and a candle for each cake you ice. You could also use sugar sprinkles or sugar balls to decorate the cake. You will need something to spread the icing with and a plate to put the cake on might also be useful.

Decorate the cake how you like, and put a candle in a candle holder in the top. If you are allowed to, you might like to light the candle, and sing happy birthday to the church before you blow it out.

**Talk about:** the happiness that birthdays bring. We should be happy on the Church’s birthday too.

**Celebration**

Do you like waiting? Sometimes you have to wait for things.

Last Thursday was Ascension day. This is the day, forty days after Easter, when we remember Jesus going back to heaven. It happened like this. Jesus was appearing every now and then to the disciples. He appeared to two of them walking to Emmaus, he appeared in the Upper Room when Thomas wasn’t there, and later when he was there. He appeared beside the Sea of Galilee. Then he said it is time for him to go back to heaven and to God. The disciples walked with him to a place near Bethany – it may have been a hill. When they got there, Jesus talked to them about spreading his message to the whole world, and then he disappeared from them into a cloud. If you ever go up a big hill when it’s cloudy, you may see the clouds at the top of the hill – you can’t see who is there or not there. After Jesus disappeared, they saw two people who asked them why they were still there staring into space, and who reminded them that Jesus had told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the next thing to happen, but not to go anywhere too far while they were waiting.

Make Ascension Day spiral

We’ll sing “Lord I lift your name on high” <https://youtu.be/c12Ta6_WJrw>

The disciples went back to Jerusalem. They waited there. They waited and they waited. They didn’t know how long they would have to wait. They kept on waiting. After ten whole days, all of a sudden, they heard a noise. The noise was like the sound of the wind. Like a really strong, loud wind. Then they saw flames! The flames came down, on their heads!! And that’s when they knew that the Holy Spirit, God’s special friend for them, had arrived. They were filled up with it, full to overflowing. They just had to let some of it out.

You may have made a paint splatter picture to represent the flames, or a windsock or boat to show the effect of the wind. One reason Christians use the idea of the wind when they think about the Holy Spirit is because you can’t see the wind, and you can’t see the Holy Spirit, but you can feel them both, sometimes very gently, and sometimes quite strong. On that first day the disciples felt the Holy Spirit like a very strong wind, enough to blow them along.

Let’s make the Windsock

Let’s sing “Spirit of God, unseen as the wind” <https://youtu.be/ozWAspk5Zcg>

When God’s Holy Spirit comes to you, changes happen. The disciples stopped being afraid, and went outside into the centre of the town, and started to talk to everybody who’d listen about Jesus. It was quite early in the morning when it happened. The day it happened was a special festival day to celebrate the first bit of harvest, and that day was called Pentecost. When Christians think of Pentecost they forget that it was already a celebration. Pentecost is 50 days after Passover, which means this was 50 days after Easter. Because it was a celebration day there were a lot of people around, from a lot of different countries. And that’s not all. Paul the Apostle wrote about the fruit of the spirit in his letter to the Galatian church. “*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law*.”

When the disciples went out on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people decided to follow Jesus. This was the start, the birthday of the church. This is why we made cakes like little birthday cakes, but we can’t put the right number of candles on as we don’t have space for 1,990 candles.

We’re going to say a prayer, then we’ll sing another song.

Let’s pray.

Dear father God, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to the disciples to be their friend and to help them be strong. Please send us the same strength and your fruit as well.

Amen

Sing Jesus, you are changing me. <https://youtu.be/vEmlM3Gqvjg>

Next Messy Church is 17th June. See you then.

Enjoy our celebration on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>

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

We’ll have a Zoom meeting open for those who can’t come to the church. Our end of Zoom will go on YouTube during the celebration, but we won’t put pictures from your end on. Contact me if you want the link for Zoom. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos>