

Feel free to adapt this for however you are doing church in lockdown. For advice on how to make church more child-friendly, check out our podcast with Sam Donoghue at youthandchildrens.work/Media.

PENTECOST

MEETING AIM

To discover that the Holy Spirit lives with us and helps us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:1-41

BACKGROUND

It's easy to see the events of Pentecost as a story, something that happened to Jesus' followers as part of the ongoing post-Easter narrative. However, if we do that, we miss out on the fact that the Holy Spirit is living and active today, and ministers to everyone of all ages. How can we help our congregations discover the Holy Spirit anew this Pentecost?

WELCOME ACTIVITIES

5 MINS

OPTION ONE: Testimony

Before the session, find people whose lives have been changed by the Holy Spirit. Bring these people to the front and encourage them to tell their story.

OPTION TWO: Young and old

You will need: large sheets of paper; Post-it notes; pens

Stick up sheets of paper around your venue. On each one, write an age group, eg 'Young children', 'People in their 40s', 'Over-80s'. Encourage people to write on a Post-it something those groups should be able to do and stick it to the paper. Are there certain things people can and can't do? What about doing God's work?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: volunteers who can speak different languages; Joel 2:28-29 written on a scroll; a volunteer to be the prophet Joel; image or film of fire to show on a screen; a volunteer to be Peter

Before the service, ask people in the congregation who can speak different languages to be ready to shout "God is good" in a language other than English. Prime them to sit in different parts of your meeting space.

Without introduction, your prophet Joel should come to the front with the scroll, unroll it and read Joel 2:28-29 fiercely and confidently. Joel should

then depart, leaving his scroll at the front. Ask the congregation what they thought of Joel's words.

Create some sound effects that would signify a blowing wind. The congregation could do these with their voices or by tapping hands on knees or gently clapping. Go on to tell this story:

It was 50 days since Jesus rose to life again, 40 days since he went back into heaven. Jesus' friends had been meeting together, but they were nervous. They met behind closed doors, concerned that the authorities would come after them. They were all gathered together for Pentecost, the festival that celebrated the harvest. Suddenly they heard a sound. *Encourage the congregation to perform their wind sound effects.*

The room where they were meeting was filled with what looked like tongues of fire. *Show the image or video of fire on your screen.* The flames came to rest on each of their heads; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit! *Pick up Joel's scroll and read his words again. Ask the congregation how they would feel if they were in that room.*

People from all over the world were in Jerusalem for the festival. Suddenly they heard the disciples speak in different languages. *Cue your volunteers to stand up and shout in their language.* These bystanders were amazed. They heard ordinary Jewish people speaking in their own language. What did it all mean? Some thought the disciples were drunk! *Take a straw poll – who would have thought this was from God and who would have thought they were drunk?*

Peter knew what was happening. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. *Your Peter volunteer should come to the front and say "We're not drunk, it's still early morning!" and then read Joel's scroll.* Peter told the crowd that Jesus had died to save them and they should believe and be baptised. Thousands did believe!

SMALL GROUPS

10 MINS

You will need: copies of the questions below; Bibles

Break into groups, giving each group a copy of these questions and a Bible:

- What's your favourite part of the story?
- Have you experienced the Holy Spirit?

- What difference does Jesus having the Holy Spirit as a helper and comforter make to your life?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage in they need to.

REVIEW

10 MINS

You will need: roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on questions two and three from 'Small groups', using a microphone to hear people's contributions if your meeting space is large.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

10 MINS

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space. Explain each one and encourage people to go to the one that will help them respond most effectively.

OPTION ONE: Hot seating

You will need: Peter volunteer; a chair
Before the session, make sure your Peter volunteer is familiar with his story from meeting Jesus to Pentecost. Sit Peter down in the middle of the group; people can ask him questions as if he were Peter. Peter should answer in character, allowing the group to think more deeply about his story and the impact of the Holy Spirit.

OPTION TWO: Discussion

Assign some volunteers to help guide a discussion about the story and what it might mean for the congregation today.

OPTION THREE: Art

You will need: art materials; paper
Give people the space to create a piece of artwork in response to what they have discovered today.

CLOSING

5 MINS

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



TINA AND THE TENT TENSION

"Take tube A and insert into sockets 23, 46 and 79G, making sure that the connection is free from interference from canvas panel M."

"I don't think reading the instructions for the tenth time makes it any easier to put the stupid tent up," said Tina, amid an array of poles, brackets and extra-tension locking hinges.

"I thought you said you were an experienced camper," said Tayo, peering over the vast set of instructions.

"I am," replied Tina, "but I've never camped in a tent this...old before."

"What's wrong with it?" asked Tayo. "My grandad used to camp in this every summer."

"When was that? Elizabethan times?"

"Listen, it can't be that hard. Let's try again: take tube A..."

Eventually, the tent was up, thanks to hard work, chocolate and ingenious use of gaffer tape. Tina and Tayo managed to get everything inside just before the skies opened and the rain came pouring down. They sat looking out onto the rain-sodden field they were camping in.

"Do you think it's going to stop?" asked Tayo.

"Yes, but not until 2025," said Tina.

Suddenly they heard a sound like someone was running a tap. They'd sprung a leak! They hurriedly shifted their stuff away from the waterfall cascading into their tent, but not before Tayo's sleeping bag had been soaked with the entire month's rainfall for North Yorkshire.

"Don't worry, I've brought a repair kit. It's for the new tent I got for Christmas, but it should work on this old thing." Tina rummaged in her bag, while Tayo tried to make a dam out of dehydrated pasta whirled and an Ordinance Survey map. Tina put on her waterproof and rushed outside.

"Wait!" Tayo shouted after her. "My grandad said we should use his old repair kit. New patches might not stick properly!" But the sound of the rain drowned her voice, as well as everything else.

Eventually, Tina came back in. "There! Good as new!"

They both looked at the repaired hole. As they watched, they saw the shadow of the new patch disappear as the glue failed and the patch blew away in the wind.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chat about the story, what the family members liked and didn't like. Has anyone ever been in a similar position? You could use some of these questions in your discussion:

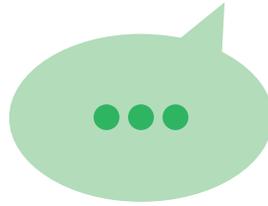
- Why did Tina's tent triage fail?
- Have you had experience of trying to merge old and new?
- Is everything old bad and new good? Why? Why not?
- If this were a story of Jesus', what might he be trying to say?

This story is based on Matthew 9:16-17. If you'd like to add a more explicit faith element to your discussion, then read this passage together. Compare Jesus' two examples to this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*. He tips his hat to Victoria Wood's *Val de Reo* (*Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha*).

We're currently publishing just one out of the two resources that normally features on this page, but don't worry **Ready to use mentoring** is still available online (as are all the other resources) at youthandchildrens.work/Resources.



WAITING FOR GOD TO SPEAK

When I was about 13, my mum printed off Proverbs 3:1-13 and stuck it on the wall in the downstairs toilet. Sounds funny, but it's one of my warmest memories of growing up in that house! Regular periods of 'meditation' in that loo have etched it in my mind and engrained it on my heart. God has used it to help shape my life. The key verse? "In all your ways submit to (or acknowledge) him, and he will make your paths straight" (verse 6).

As a teenager I thought it meant God would tell me what to do. As I grew older, I realised that as I submitted to him I learned (to a degree) to have his wisdom, and ended up wanting the things that he would want for me anyway. This is a much more empowering way to live; when we realise that we become like him and desire what he desires, then we can go ahead and make our own decisions in life confidently and without wondering if it's the 'right' thing to do, or waiting endlessly for writing on the wall or the voice out of the blinding light. (Of course, sometimes he does speak more clearly.)

Discuss this with your mentee. Are they frustrated, waiting for God to speak to them about what to do with their life – about GCSE options or relationships etc? How do they think God will guide them? How can they 'listen' better? What is their responsibility...and what is God's?

A good way to help focus their mind is the following exercise. Draw a star (or write 'star') in the middle of a sheet of paper. Ask them to write things they want from life on the paper – the more important they are, the closer to the star they should go. It might help to divide the paper into quadrants, so each section is a different category such as 'Family' 'School / Career', 'Health' etc.

They should find it fairly easy to begin with but wait until they have run out of ideas before prompting them to think of five more. Once they have done this, encourage them to think harder and get three more. These are the less obvious ones they have not considered before but may well be the most valuable.

Now ask them to circle any that they feel God also really values. Go through and discuss them; cross out ones that aren't relevant, or aren't what God wants for them right now. What are they left with? It might be useful to rewrite them in concentric circles to denote how important they are – again with the middle denoting the most important. Could one of these be a useful goal to work through between mentor / mentee over the coming weeks?

Spend a moment in silence, allowing God to use your emotions and thoughts to filter and 'speak' to your spirit. Then feedback to each other and agree what you think the way forward is.

If you are not able to meet with your mentee face-to-face, then arrange to video call them and chat with them (make sure you follow safeguarding guidelines - see p13). Both do the exercise and afterwards, scan in your different versions and email them to each other.

JOEL TOOMBS

has an MA in Christian mentoring and wrote the *Mentoring and Young People Grove* booklet. He is a volunteer youth worker.

BOARD GAMES

You might find that you have a lot of time at home with your children or young people. Board games are great for building social skills and spending quality time together. To this end, you might want to steer clear of games such as Monopoly, which can quickly result in a vast inequality between players (and angry outbursts from those who are suddenly forced to hand over all their money). Here are some suggestions of games you can try.



SNAKES AND LADDERS

Sometimes the simple games are the best. When you play this, you can chat about the ups and downs of life. It is a safe way to help children process experiencing disappointment, as well as exploring how downturns can quickly turn to good.

If you have the space, you could work together to create a large version of the game using whatever you can find in your house. Mark the squares out with masking tape on a carpet or work on a patio outside and use chalk. Create snakes out of bedsheets, and ladders out of cardboard tubes or garden canes.

THE GAME OF LIFE

You might have played it when you were younger. Interestingly, as an adult, it is not quite as engaging as you may remember! However, children love it and it is worth playing as you can chat about life – different life events that might happen, different paths you can take and what you and your family might hope for in the future. As you play, chat about what your different family members would like to happen in their lives, and the role God and faith might play in that.

TICKET TO RIDE

While travel remains difficult, particularly foreign travel, you can tour the world with Ticket to Ride. This is a fairly new game, which quickly gained a strong reputation. Starting with the American version in 2004, several different countries and versions have been added. However, you will need the America or Europe edition to start with, as these provide all the elements you need for a full game (the other versions are expansions of the basic game).

It's more complex than a game like Tsuru (see right), so is more suitable for families with older children or young people. Players seek to complete routes by collecting train cards of different colours and claiming tracks between destinations. However, there are only a limited number of ways to get from place to place, and everyone is competing to complete their own routes (which are kept secret from the other players). Your routes might get blocked by your competitors, and you might have to take long detours! You could use this to chat about when things don't go well, and changes to plans have to be made. This could be a good way into discussion over plans or events that have had to be cancelled; how can you bring good from such disappointment?

TSURO

This is a simple concept, but engaging for all ages. Your playing token starts at the edge of a board marked out in squares six by six. In your hand you have three tiles, each with a different arrangement of pathways. You place a tile in front of your token and move it along the marked path on the tile. Each player does the same in turn, being careful not to follow a path which leads them off the board. The object of the game is to be the last person on the board.

As play progresses, players will come into contact with each other and have the chance to send their opponents off the board! Some players may have no choice but to send themselves off the board. Chat together about how we treat others when competing in games and in life. How much do we try to send others off course to gain advantage for ourselves?

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work* and is a huge board-game fan.

PENTECOST

Pentecost is an amazing celebration of the birth of the Church and its spectacular growth in just one day. There are so many visual and sensory images within the story that lend themselves to creativity. Here are some craft activities to draw out some of the key themes and events.



BIRTHDAY CAKE

You will need: four eggs; 200g butter; 200g self-raising flour; 200g caster sugar; jam; buttercream; two seven-inch (18cm) cake tins; extra butter for greasing; a mixing bowl; a wooden spoon; a spatula; an oven; a cooling tray; birthday cake candles; birthday cake decorations

Baking is a good activity to do at home, and provides a lot of time for chatting.

Grease the two cake tins and preheat the oven to 180°C. In the mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugar with the wooden spoon. Gradually beat in the eggs and then fold in the flour. Divide the mixture between the cake tins and bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden and springy to the touch. Leave the cakes to cool.

When cool, fill the cakes with jam and buttercream, and decorate. Talk about the day of Pentecost signalling the first day when the Church began to grow. Talk about how your child would like to see your church grow and how they would tell people about Jesus. Give them a candle to add to the cake as a sign of their ideas. Light the candle, blow it out and share the cake. Use the eating time to discuss the story further!



FIERY FLAMES

You will need: tape measure; scissors; red, yellow and orange tissue paper and card; battery-operated tealights; glue

Measure the circumference of the tealight and cut a strip of card slightly longer than the circumference. Cut flame shapes out of the tissue paper and glue them to the strip of card so that the bottom of each flame lines up with the bottom of the card strip. Make several layers of tissue flames.

Fit the card strip around the tealight and glue it in place. Switch on the tealight to bring the flames to life. Use the craft as a starting point to talk about the power of fire and how that might connect with the Holy Spirit.

PLAYDOUGH MAT

You will need: playdough (red, yellow and orange would work especially well); laminated copies of the playdough mat from youthandchildrens.work/resources

Using the playdough mat, encourage your child to make playdough flames above the heads of the figures. Use the opportunity to chat about what the disciples must have felt when they saw the flames in the upper room.



WIND CHIMES

You will need: small embroidery hoops (these can be bought cheaply online); wool; string; beads; pipe cleaners; paperclips; buttons; old keys; old CDs; sequins

The open-ended nature of this craft leaves plenty of space for your family to discuss the story and the links between the wind and the Spirit. Wind string, wool and / or pipe cleaners around the embroidery hoop to decorate it and fix a pipe cleaner to the hoop so that it can be hung from above. Attach more lengths of string and pipe cleaners to the hoop so that there are strings that hang down. Decorate these downward-hanging strings with beads, buttons, small metal objects and anything that will shine or make a noise. When the wind chimes have been completed, hang them outside on trees or poles and listen for the blowing of the wind!

MINA MUNNS

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FIGHTING WITH MY FAMILY (12)

We're currently publishing just one out of the two resources that normally features on this page, but don't worry **Ready to use music** is still available online (as are all the other resources) at youthandchildrens.work/Resources.

Watch the whole film together or concentrate on the clip:
00:24:30 – 00:31:54.

SYNOPSIS

Born into a tight-knit wrestling family, Paige and her brother, Zak, are ecstatic when they get the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to try out for the WWE. But when only Paige earns a spot in the competitive training programme, she must leave her loved ones behind and face this new cut-throat world alone. Paige's journey pushes her to dig deep and ultimately prove to the world that what makes her different is the very thing that can make her a star.

As the movie progresses, it brings up issues such as body image, sibling rivalry and what it means to be a woman in the public eye. Paige's eventual success in wrestling is not really the end game here, instead it is her accepting who she is in the world today – a great message for your family.

Start by chatting about times when family members have had to train really hard for something before, and how they felt during that process. *Fighting with My Family* explores the characters of Zak and Paige and how they had to work hard and sacrifice everything to achieve their dreams of working in WWE. Only one of them manages to do this, so reflect on times when anyone worked really hard at something only to not quite make it. Explain that *Fighting with My Family* explores the highs of success and the lows of failure.

The recommended clip focuses on Paige and Zak's trial with the WWE. After performing in front of the head coach, and receiving some advice from her brother along the way, Paige is the only person selected to go to America and train with the WWE further. Despite her happiness at being the youngest ever British person accepted onto the WWE course, Paige's success is impacted by her brother's failure. Despite his sadness, Zak encourages Paige to go ahead and pursue her dream.

DISCUSS

After watching the clip together, have a chat about what you've seen. You might want to use some of these questions to explore the issues:

- Is Paige wrong for pursuing her dream and leaving her brother behind?
- After confronting the coach, Paige is told that 99 per cent of people don't make it. What separates those who succeed from those who don't?
- How do you think Zak is feeling during this clip?
- Could a Christian be involved in wrestling?

If you'd like to extend this into a family Bible time, then read Luke 18:1-8 together. What are the similarities and differences between the film and this story? If your family are keen, think about some of these questions:

- What is the overall message of this story? Why would Jesus tell it?
- What are the two characteristics of the judge? Why might someone become like that?
- What motivates the woman to persist? Why is she successful?
- What motivates us to ask God for help?

This clip sees Paige succeed after years of training and preparation. Perhaps important events have been canceled or the loss of school has hit your family hard, so challenge them to look out for someone they could support when things don't go as they'd planned.

TOM WADE

is head of humanities at Haileybury and Imperial Service College.



LONELY

ARTIST: Joel Corry

SUITABLE FOR: families with children aged ten to 13

INTRODUCTION

You may think this song and session would be better suited for the 13-plus age bracket, but the reality is smartphone usage among ten to 13-year-olds is on the rise, with statistics from the US released in November 2019 revealing 53 percent of eleven-year-olds and 69 per cent of twelve-year-olds have their own smartphone. This activity will challenge your family to disconnect their phones and reconnect with one another in a battle against loneliness (see John Mark Comer's Q&A on p14 for more on this). As you start, put all your mobile phones into a box and set them aside.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play the track – you should be able to find the official video on YouTube. After watching, chat about the song, which family members liked it and which didn't. If your family is keen, you could discuss the following questions:

- What did you notice about that video?
- Obviously, it's a bit exaggerated and tongue-in-cheek, but do you agree with the message it is sharing, or disagree?
- How do you feel about the lyrics of this song?

Don't let your discussion become a moral lesson in 'don't spend time on your phone' (though it's likely that *all* members of your family spend too long on their phone, not just your

young people!); try to avoid a tone of judgement and encourage an atmosphere of openness with one another.

Ask what loneliness means to them, reminding them that your family is a place where you can talk about these issues. Explain that as a human race we have never been better connected to one another, thanks to phones and other technology, and yet we have never felt more isolated or lonely. Ask the group why they think this may be. Recent events may have exacerbated everyone's sense of isolation.

If you want to expand your time to encompass a faith element, chat about how that the Bible has something to say about our loneliness, firstly to remind us that God is always with us and will never leave our side, but also that we are created to be together with other human beings, living in community.

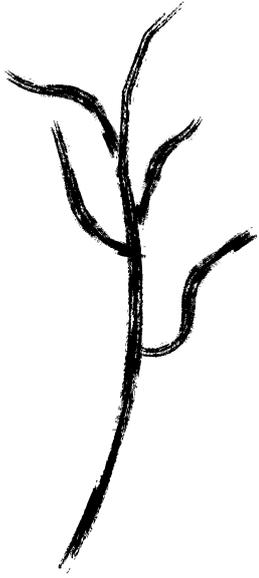
What might it mean for your family to be more connected to one another and less connected to technology? Practise this art of being connected by playing games together – either video or board games (see p33 and p43). If your family is happy to do so, you could pray for one another that you would be able to live out this connectivity both as a family and with friends and other relatives, using phones and technology to connect through video calls, messages of support and group chats.

BECKY MAY

is a freelance writer and experienced children's and youth leader. She can be found at theresourcescupboard.co.uk.

REACHING FOR GOD

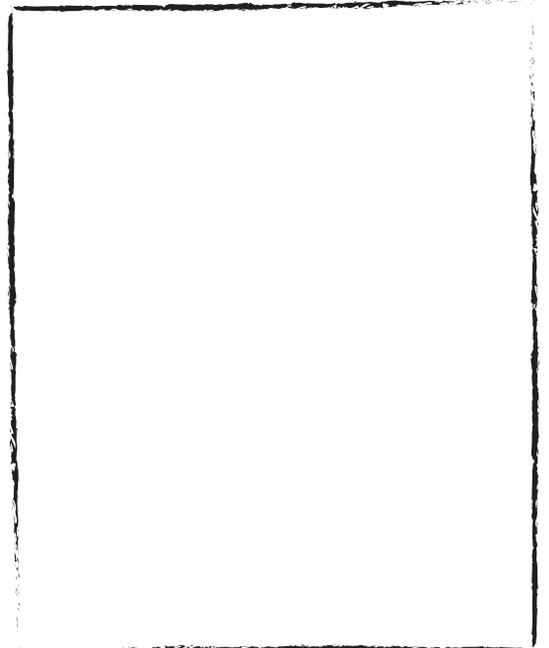
Take this reflection journal outside. Go into your garden or look out of a window.
Sketch one of the trees you can see in the space below.



Reflect on the angle of the tree's trunk and in which direction the branches have grown. Why do you think the tree and its branches have grown into this particular shape?

From when a tree is only a small sapling, it seeks out the sunlight which is necessary for it to grow. Over time this changes the shape of the tree. If it is growing up in the shadow of another big tree or a building, it won't grow straight but gradually and very slowly begins to tilt towards the sunlight. Look around at the trees where you are and see if you can copy some of the trees' 'postures' – some will stand straight, others lean to one side.

We're not trees! But in our Christian life, we need God like a tree needs the sun. And like a tree leans towards the sun, we need to 'lean' towards God to get the relationship with him. This can look like giving him more time, by just being with him or praying; listening more to him, at church or by reading the Bible; or some other way. Draw another sketch of what it might look like for you to 'lean' towards God.



"YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME WHEN YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART"
(Jeremiah 29:13).