

LESSON 13

THE MYSTERY OF PENTECOST

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: THE PEOPLE OF GOD MEET GOD IN A NEW WAY

- LITURGICAL ACTION
- CORE PRESENTATION

THE MATERIAL

- LOCATION: SACRED STORY (NEW TESTAMENT) SHELVES
- PIECES: RED PARABLE-SIZED BOX, 12 BROWN FELT STRIPS, 6 PLAIN WOODEN BLOCKS, SYMBOLS OF THE TWELVE
- UNDERLAY: RED

BACKGROUND

Something strange happened on Pentecost that had to do with “tongues” of fire and speaking so that no matter what “tongues” others spoke, they could understand what was meant. Did their tongues burn in their mouths as they began to communicate in a new way? Was the communication nonverbal? Can God’s presence be communicated in words?

The strange event on the Day of Pentecost reminds us of the earlier day when communication was fractured so that what before had been understandable was now babel, a confusion of tongues. That is why this lesson begins with the Tower of Babel, from Genesis 11:1-9. This presentation also draws on stories found in Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:5-14; 2:1-12.

In future volumes, we will describe materials for a whole set of Pentecost liturgical shelves. For now, we need to include the red box of the Mystery of Pentecost to complete the cycle of three great times in the Circle of the Church Year. We have lessons for the Mystery of Christmas (*The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 3*, pp. 56-63), for the Mystery of Easter (this volume, pp. 27-31) and, now, for the Mystery of Pentecost.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

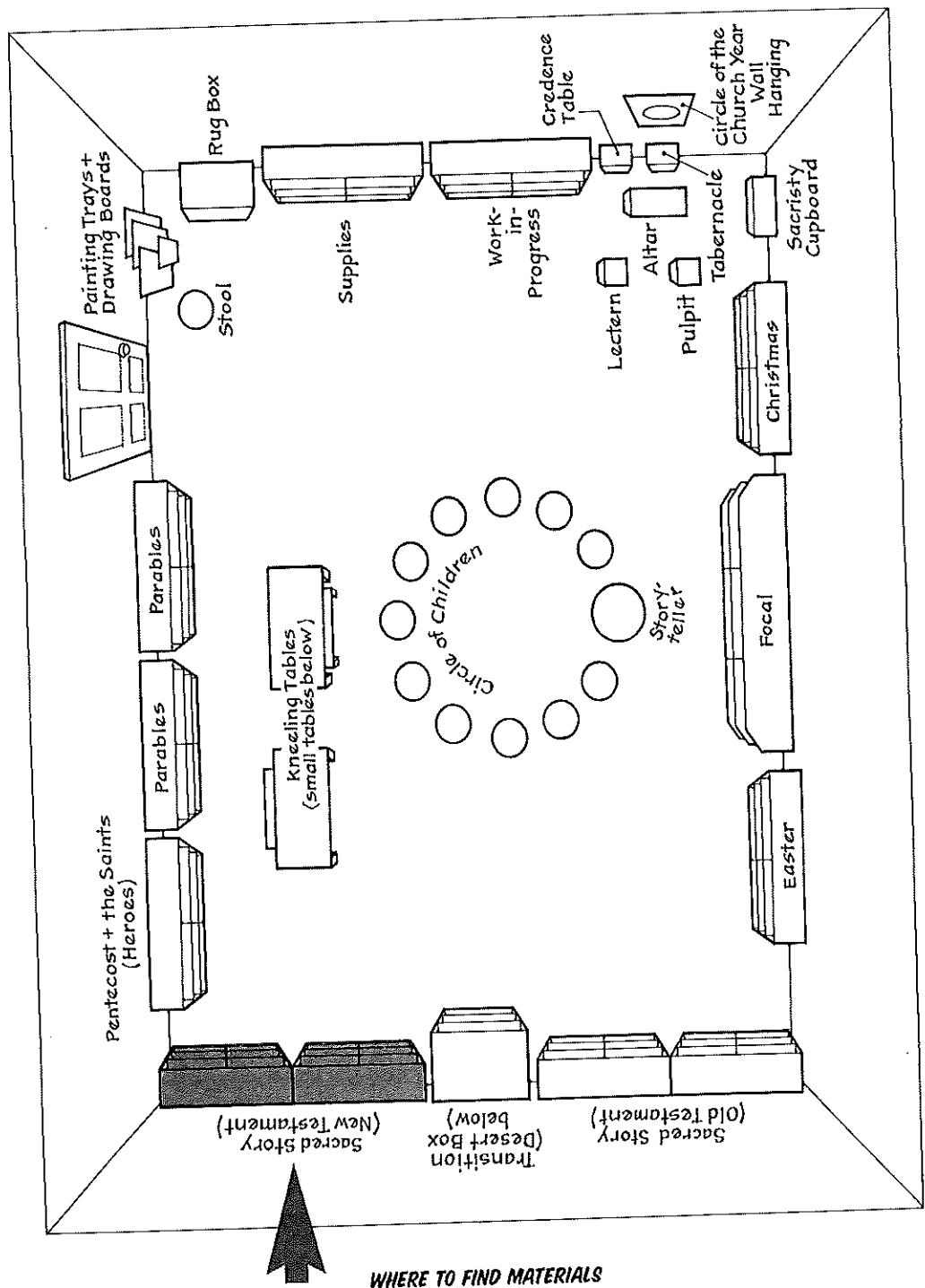
Until materials for the Pentecost liturgical shelves are published, place this material on the right side of the top shelf of the New Testament section of the Sacred Story shelves, as you stand facing the shelves. Only the materials for "Paul's Discovery" and "The Part that Hasn't Been Written Yet" will be farther to the right.

The box is red and the same size and shape as the parable boxes. Inside the box is a red felt underlay that matches the size and shape of the underlay used in the Parable of the Good Shepherd (*The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 3*, pp. 77-86). There are also twelve brown felt strips (about 1" x 10") that match the strips from the Parable of the Good Shepherd. The box also holds six plain wooden blocks (about 3" x 3") that can be stacked to make a Tower of Babel. Finally, there is a container that holds the symbols of the Twelve.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling Tip: This lesson resembles a parable. Like a parable, it's meant to be symbolic, rather than historical. Stacking the blocks, however, creates a three-dimensional structure, adding concreteness to the story. We balance this concreteness by using symbols instead of figures for the apostles and brown strips instead of a model for Jerusalem. This moves the presentation toward the parabolic rather than the concrete.

Our intent is to leave room for God to enter and play. Making the presentation too realistic blocks the mystery, shuts the door to God's presence, and turns the event into past history instead of present encounter.



MOVEMENTS

WORDS

When the children are settled, go to the shelves where the material is located. Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this material.

Pick up the red box with mystery and amazement. This is the Mystery of Pentecost.

Bring the box to the circle and place it in the center of the children. Sit back. Relax. Be present.

Move the box to your side with the lid propped up on the side facing the children, so they won't be tempted to peek at what is coming out of the box next. I wonder what could be inside? This looks like a parable box, but it is red. It must be like a parable and yet not be a parable. I have an idea. Let's look inside and see what is there.

Take out the underlay. Leave it crumpled in the middle of the circle for a moment and then smooth it out. There are some things inside to tell the story, but there is nothing else to put down to help us get ready. I guess all we can do, then, is begin.

Pause and begin. There was once a great tower.

Place the first block down in the middle of the underlay. Everyone working on the tower spoke the same language and worked together.

Put the second block down on top of the first. But as the tower grew taller and taller, they began to talk in different ways.

Slowly build up the blocks as you tell the story. The tower came close to God, but the people forgot why they were building it. They grew so proud of themselves that they began to think they were greater builders than God. Each group thought it was better than any of the others.

Keep building block by block, in such a way that the tower becomes more precarious. A huge noise replaced their talking. It made no sense. Everyone was babbling.

The blocks now need to fall of their own weight. Soon the tower fell down, so it was called the Tower of Babel. The language of the people of the earth was shattered and broke into splinters. Each one was beautiful, but it was broken.

MOVEMENTS

Slowly pick up the blocks and put them back into the box. Sit back and pause. Reflect silently on what has happened.

Lay out the brown felt strips in a rectangle, leaving an open space for a doorway.

Place all the symbols of the Twelve, except the symbol for Matthias (the symbol with a sword and book), inside the rectangle. There is no symbol for Judas.

Move the symbols for the disciples outside Jerusalem and place them in a circle.

With your palms turned up, raise your hands upward together.

Turn your hands over and hold them over the circle of disciples and then allow one hand to move slowly down and lightly touch the disciples.

Add the symbol of Matthias to the group, which is now inside "Jerusalem." Crowd them together in the center of the rectangle made from the brown strips.

WORDS

Thousands of years passed. Then Jesus died on the cross, but somehow he was still with the people around him as he is with us. They kept seeing him, and they couldn't let him go. Then one day something amazing happened.

The disciples were in Jerusalem.

Here they are: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Less, Simon and Jude. There are only eleven disciples because Judas had already killed himself.

Jesus took them outside of Jerusalem to a Mountain called Olivet, or as far as Bethany.

Jesus then went up, and soon the Holy Spirit would come down.

The eleven disciples went back into the city. They were full of joy and went to the Temple to pray. They then went to the upper room and, with God's help, decided that Matthias would take Judas' place.

On Sunday the Twelve were together again. Suddenly there was a sound like a mighty wind rushing in to be with them. It was the Holy Spirit. They became so full of its power that they seemed to be on fire. Their tongues burned in their mouths. They were so excited that people wondered what was going on.

When the disciples went out on the street, there were people there from many different countries. They spoke many different languages.

MOVEMENTS

Place the symbols of the apostles radiating out from "Jerusalem."

Sit back. Collect yourself. Breathe.

When the wondering draws to a close, place everything back in the box. Take the box back to its shelf.

Help the children choose their own work.

WORDS

Everyone could see that the Twelve had come close to God—and God had come close to them—in a new way. It no longer mattered that they spoke different languages.

☞ The disciples had become apostles! They went out into all the world to tell this story.

Ever since, Pentecost has been celebrated to remember that day.

☞ Now I wonder what part of this story you like best?

I wonder what the most important part could be?

I wonder where you are in the story? What part of the story is about you?

I wonder if we can leave out any part of this story and still have all the story we need?

I wonder if you have ever come close to something like this?

I wonder if there is anything in our church that reminds you of this?

☞ Now watch carefully where I go to put this lesson away. While I am putting it away, begin thinking about what you are going to get out for your work today.