



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich

# Ascension and Pentecost

These two important Christian festivals are celebrated during the summer term.

- Do children or staff in your school know what they celebrate?
- How about a one-off lesson in RE for each or even better an RE theme Day?

## Ascension

Ascension Day is often considered the crowning event of the ministry of Jesus. On the fortieth day after Easter, the risen Jesus went to the Mount of Olives with his disciples and ascended to heaven before their eyes (Acts 1:1-12). Exactly what this means is a matter of great mystery but the Christ that the disciples had known on earth had returned to his Father and they now had to wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit who would empower them to continue Jesus' ministry on earth.

Some churches observe Ascension Day with a service on that Thursday. Others observe Jesus' ascension on the preceding or following Sunday. As during the celebration of Easter, the liturgical colours used in church are white and gold.



Church schools once had a half-day for Ascension, and one ancient custom used to be the 'beating of the bounds' when children were shown the boundaries of their parish.

### **Why not start a new custom special to your school or parish:**

- **mapping and walking the bounds of your parish with Y5/ 6**
- **organising a walk to a high place for a picnic with parents and telling the story of Ascension**
- **walking to church for assembly with KS1 and releasing balloons**

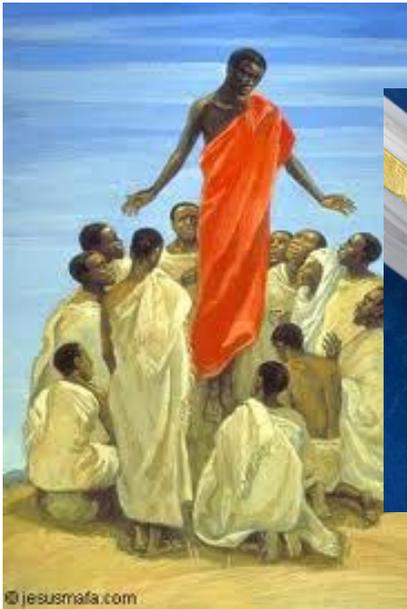
Other things to do:

- Look up the background to Ascension
- Download the Ascension story from [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Type in the reference: Acts chapter 1 v. 1-11. Compare versions of the story in different bibles.
- Interview the local vicar about why the story is important.
- Write a special prayer for Ascension Day.
- Compare different pictures of the Ascension e.g. a 15<sup>th</sup> century picture of the Ascension in Seething parish church, Norfolk, with the Salvador Dali painting.

Here are three other pictures to use:

- Jesus Mafa picture from Cameroon
- Spirit series by Angela Taylor Perry

- Roof boss at the Great Hospital Norwich



## Pentecost

Named from the Greek for 'fiftieth day' this was an important feast in the calendar of Ancient Israel celebrating the giving of the Law on Sinai. For Christians, it commemorates the descent of the promised Holy Spirit upon the remaining eleven Apostles of Christ (Judas had hanged himself) and another 120 disciples. This event took place in an Upper Room in Jerusalem after the Resurrection of Jesus as described in the Acts of the Apostles 2:1-31. For this reason, Pentecost is sometimes described as the 'Birthday of the Church'.



The feast is also called *Whit Sunday*, *Whitsun*, or *Whit*, especially in the United Kingdom, where the following Monday was traditionally a holiday. Christians celebrate Pentecost seven weeks (50 days) after Easter Sunday and ten days after Ascension which is always on a Thursday.

- Find out why Pentecost is also known as 'Whitsun'. Investigate Whit walks.
- Track down a Christian song which tells the Pentecost story and think about the words. How about the story song by Don Francisco called 'the Power'. It is on You-tube and covers beautifully both the story and the sense of praise Christians feel at the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Read the Biblical account of the story in the ACTS of the Apostles chapter 2. Use Bibles and Bible storybooks to see how the story is told. Try writing first-person accounts or freeze-framing the story.
- Discover facts about the background and celebration of Pentecost, sometimes known as the 'Birthday of the Church'.

- Search for pictures of the Pentecost story - pictures of this event are numerous and glorious! Find ways of creating your own art.
- Look for video material of the story e.g. Dan Stevers shadow-puppet version of story for Y5/6. Make your own. <http://vimeo.com/15268039>
- Have a birthday party or a dress in red day! Why do you think red is such a prominent colour. Doves, white and flames are also seen – why?
- Make some Pentecost themed crafts
- Learn some children’s Pentecost songs e.g. ‘Waiting’ by John Hardwick, or Spirit of God unseen as the wind (to the tune of Speed bonny boat).
- Get the local church involved and put on ‘Experience Pentecost’ – buy the resource from <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/resources/jfish/>.



**For both festivals:**

Design a banner, collage, stole or altar frontal to illustrate the stories or beliefs behind one of these festivals.

Use dance, drama or poetry to express the feelings or beliefs of characters in the stories.

# **Pentecost Rap** By Nick Clarke

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1-15

Verse 1: Sunday Morning `round about 9.00.  
We're all feeling scared, no one feeling fine,  
Meeting in the Market place, talking in the street,  
When down came the Lord, and gave us all a treat.

Chorus: That's what the Prophet Joel predicted  
That's who Jesus said He'd send,  
That's the power of Gods' Holy Spirit,  
You can get him if you want to,  
He's here `til the end.

Verse 2: Flames in our hair, fire in our blood,  
Made us feel strong, made us feel good,  
Feeling kinda weird, feeling kinda strange,  
Some said we're drunk, some said deranged.

Chorus

Verse 3: All start to babble, some start to fall,  
But we ain't confused, no not at all,  
Ain't on no drugs, ain't had no drink,  
This power's from God, no matter what you think.

Chorus

Verse 4: Peter was the man, he got up and spoke,  
"These people aren't drunk, and it ain't no joke,  
God's Spirit is within them, don't you realise",  
Thousands believed, and went to get baptised.

Chorus (repeat last line a second time louder, then shout "CHECK IT OUT" and point to audience).

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nickclarke1@btinternet.com