

Christian Traditions for Pentecost

Colour

There is an ancient liturgical custom of decorating churches and wearing clothes of red at Pentecost. This is to represent the flames of fire when the Holy Spirit came on the believers.

This could be followed by your church in some way, symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism and Church Membership

Just as Easter Sunday was considered an appropriate time for baptism and for becoming part of the church, aligning with the resurrection of Jesus, so Pentecost Sunday was similarly considered to be an appropriate day. This is because it was early on considered to be the birthday of the church.

Perhaps, if there is a baptism to be celebrated close to the date of Pentecost, the person could be invited to wait until Pentecost Sunday? Similarly, if people are coming to join the church, that might be arranged for Pentecost Sunday.

Because there has been a long tradition of people who are coming for baptism to wear white clothing, symbolising purity in Jesus and the garments of a bride, as the person joins the church, the Bride of Christ, the day came to be known in some traditions as 'White Sunday'. In English, this became known, over the generations, as Whit Sunday, or Whitsun.

The Dove

Because of the association of the Holy Spirit with a dove, based on the accounts of Jesus' baptism, the dove has become a visual symbol of Pentecost in some traditions.

Perhaps the children could be guided in making models of doves on the day?

In the 13th century, French cathedrals would release white pigeons inside the buildings during the services to symbolise the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Do you think ...

The Violent Wind

Some historical accounts relate that in medieval France, when the priest intoned the words 'Come, Holy Ghost', at the appropriate part of the liturgy, trumpets would be blown loudly, signifying the violent wind written about in Acts 2:2. In other countries, choirboys would hiss, hum, make odd noises with wind instruments, and rattle their benches.

Perhaps in your service, children could be invited to bring random wind instruments to blow at an appointed moment? If this was kept a secret, it could be arranged so as to scare the congregation at that appointed time, followed up by a statement that it undoubtedly was a scary time on the original day.