

# Avenues Special Event - Pentecost Birthday Party

This is an actual programme we used in our Avenues Church a few years ago. Avenues is a small church with attendance up to 20 people and our programmes are typically interactive. We began Avenues on the Day of Pentecost 2001, so each year we celebrate both the birthday of the Church and the birthday of our own congregation. However, you could use this programme to celebrate the birthday of the Church on Pentecost. It will need some adaptation to suit your group. Why not shift the chairs out of the way, set up a table in the middle of your space, and some small tables around the exterior and have a worship party!

## Prior to your event:

Ask participants to bring a plate of party food to share at the conclusion of the programme.

## Introductory Game/Activity:

As people arrive, have craft supplies available for them to start making a party hat using stickers, scissors, crepe paper and stapler while they wait for everyone to come.

## Call to Worship

Give each person a drawing of birthday candles and get them to write a word to describe their expectations of coming to worship together for this occasion. Begin your prayer with, "Lord we come to worship you today. We come with...." Invite people to finish each sentence.

## Bible Reading - Pass the Parcel



**Story: Acts 2:1-13 & 43-45**

Print out the story and cut it up into pieces. Order the pieces so the last verse is wrapped with a lollipop in the first layer of your parcel. Keep wrapping layers with a lollipop and bible verse in each layer. This can provide up to 16 layers which will need to be unwrapped. Choose a worship song to play and stop it randomly as the parcel moves around the group. (We used the Australian

group's, 'Hi-5' song, "It's a Party")

## Treasure Hunt:

Find the Birthday Candle. When all the candles are found put them into cake in the middle of your space.



## Discovery Stations:

Set each of these up on smaller tables around your space. Suggest people work alone or in pairs or trios and move around each discovery station.

## Happiness is...

*Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely (Acts 2:46)*

What does it mean to be happy?

Why were they sharing their food happily?

## Birthday Hats

*On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized. They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. (Acts 2:41-42)*



Make a party hat using the stickers, scissors, crepe paper and stapler or if you've already made a hat, you can either; add to it, make another one, help someone else... or move on to the questions.

Why celebrate the birthday of the church?

Why celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit?

Is the celebration of the first Pentecost relevant today?

## Relationship

*Jesus was taken up to sit at the right side of God, and he was given the Holy Spirit, just as the Father had promised. Jesus is also the one who has given the Spirit to us, and that is what you are now seeing and hearing. (Acts 2:33)*

Pentecost means we are not alone. We are in relationship even as the Spirit is in relationship (Note. The presence of the Trinity in creation, at the outset of Jesus ministry, at the outset of the Spirit's ministry). The way we reflect the message of Jesus is hugely influenced by the condition of our relationships with others (i.e. our spouse, children/extended family, friends, school/work scene, etc). Make a people chain. Write your own name on the first person and then write names of other people on subsequent shapes.

Pray for each person on your people chain and the relationship you have with them. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be part of your interaction with other people.

## Breath

*On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. (Acts 2:1-2)*

Use the coloured paper, pins and plasticine to make a windmill.

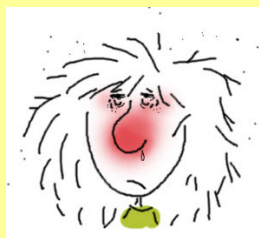
Consider the wind. How is God's involvement in our lives like wind?

Blow your windmill and say a one sentence prayer for yourself and/or for others who need the breath of God in their lives.



## Warmth

*Now, listen to what I have to say about Jesus from Nazareth. God proved that he sent Jesus to you by having him work miracles, wonders, and signs. All of you know this. (Acts 2:22)*



(Pre-print-out some pictures showing people or things which will make you feel warm or cold)

Look at the images.

Group them into two piles depending on whether the item makes you feel warm or cold.

Why do people feel happier when they are warm?

Consider warmth. How is God's involvement in our lives like warmth? How is it a sign of God's love? How do we pass the warmth of God's love to others? Is it important to share warmth?

Why or why not?

## Hospitality

*Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved. (Acts 2:43-46)*

The disciples in the early church set an example of hospitality and sharing at some cost to themselves. Take the challenge this week to share a meal or cup of coffee with someone who needs some encouragement.

## Fire



*Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. (Acts 2: 3)*

Look at the video of the fire burning.

What are the properties of fire?

Consider fire. How is God like fire?

Light a candle and say a prayer to God of response to God at work in your life.

## Come together

Birthday Cake – Birthday of Church/Avenues – When all the candles are in the cake suggest that one candle is so much more effective when it is placed among other candles. That's what it means to be church. Light the candles. Sing Happy Birthday to the Church and then Happy Birthday to Avenues.

## Offering

Presentation of warm gifts for Auckland City Mission & Prayer for the mission work

## Ending Prayer

Invite people to pray a one sentence prayer about anything that they would like in relation to the day's event.

Include prayers for others needs in your group.

Include prayers for others needs in your wider community.

Include prayers for others needs beyond your community boundaries

**Take home:** Party blower. Blow it sometime today and remember this celebration of God's spirit being shared with people. Blow it and ask God for his spirit to be at work in your life. Blow it and pray for God's breath to be in the life of someone you know needs God's love.

