**TEACHING STARTER**

**Theme: ‘All change please!’**

**Bible Passage: Acts 2:1-18**

**Introduction**

Pentecost was a moment of change. Not an incremental ‘tweak a bit here and tweak a bit there’ kind of change, but a ‘nothing will ever be the same from today’ kind of change. For Jesus’ friends and followers, it was a huge leap into the unknown.

Some people love change. Others aren’t so keen. *Ask people to think about whether they embrace change willingly, or whether they prefer to put their heads in the sand and hope it never happens.* Those are extremes, of course, but it remains true that change evokes a number of different reactions in us: exhilaration, fear, a sense of refreshment, a sense of frustration…A couple of things we can consider are:

* How did God’s Spirit help a perplexed and traumatised bunch of people – some change-lovers and some change-avoiders – to step into this new life?
* How does the Spirit help us to journey through change?

**Context**

**1.Gift**

* Central to Pentecost is the truth that God is a gift: the gift of creation; the gift of Jesus, his death and resurrection; and now the gift of God himself in the Holy Spirit. God is constantly giving to us.
* The Holy Spirit isn’t a goodie-bag of gifts and powers. The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of Jesus, poured into us, God’s people. Remarkable!
* Amid crisis and change, the disciples sat in a room and felt a wind begin to blow on them (v2). When change happens, whether it’s welcome or forced on us, God shows up, bringing gifts, providing all we need, and renewing in us the comforting, strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Joy**

* However uncertain those disciples felt about the changes which life had brought them, they all burst out of that upper room full of joy and exhilaration. Frightened people suddenly became bold, exuberant and very talkative (v4)! When we let the Spirit work in us, even the most change-averse among us can face change with courage and joy.
* Where God calls us to go, God also accompanies us. The Spirit sees where we’ve come from, where we are and where we’re going. It’s comforting to realise that, though we may not know the road ahead, the Spirit does.
* People spoke in languages they’d never learnt. Peter, who’d denied Jesus, stood up and gave the sermon of his life (vv14-36). When the Spirit calls us forward into the unknown, joy breaks out and all sorts of things become possible which we could never have imagined before. All God needs is our ‘yes’.

1. **Together**

* Pentecost wasn’t just a new day for the favoured few; it was a new day for everyone everywhere. The tongues of fire landed on every person in the upper room, and Peter reminded the crowds that God had promised to pour out the Spirit on all people. That ‘all people’ (v17) includes us – all of us.
* In case anyone hadn’t quite understood the ‘all people’ part, Peter spelled it out: women and men, young and old, maidservants and menservants. And

not only would they receive the Spirit, but they would also prophesy (v18).

* The new thing God is doing isn’t brought into being by an elite group of favoured ones; it belongs to everyone and it isn’t complete until everyone’s voice has been heard. When God breathes a new day into being, the Spirit speaks through all sorts of people; we all get given a bit of the jigsaw and we all matter.

**Conclusion**

Why didn’t Pentecost happen to each of those disciples in the comfort of their own home? Is it because we deal better with change when we’re together, working together, supporting each other, listening to each other and committing to journey together into the new? Persecution and political upheaval would eventually scatter the Church to the four corners of the earth, but first the Spirit knit them together into a community where every person had a place.

**Reflection**

* What change are you journeying through at the moment? Have you noticed God giving you gifts to help you step more confidently into this next season?
* Do you need a burst of that Pentecost joy? Do you find yourself more fearful than joyful? Sometimes joy comes only when we let go and trust. What might you need to let go of? How could you give God your ‘yes’ today?
* If God is speaking through all of us, how can we get better at listening to each other? Which voices do we tend not to hear? How is God knitting your corps together into a closer community at the moment? What change is your corps facing, and how might you support one another as the Spirit leads you through?