



SESSION

2

The early Church

**MEETING AIM**

To explore some of the hallmarks of the early Church and what we can learn from them about how to be church.

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37

**BACKGROUND**

So much of what our young children will experience as church bears little resemblance to the early Church, and is far more based on more recent, (relatively, at least!) innovations of western culture. This session is designed to strip away all the trappings of church as we know it, and explore together how the first church shared life together as followers of Jesus, helping us, and the children we lead, to begin to find our place in the church.

+ CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and welcome parents to join you for this time, if appropriate. Encourage the children to share their stories and news from the week and celebrate special events that have taken place, such as birthdays. Help the children to really listen to one another as they share their stories. Encourage them to ask questions of each other to help them discover more and take a real interest in the lives of their friends.

+ INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a play parachute; small foam balls

Gather the children together to play some games with the parachute, which will give you the opportunity to bring the group together to play as one large group. The games you play could include Popcorn, Cat and Mouse, All Change and Ball Roll (details of how to play each of these games, and others, can be found online). The focus of this activity is on drawing the group together, building team spirit, unity and a sense of community through fun games.

+ BIBLE STORY

You will need: a number of play figures to represent the disciples and Jesus; a small box; fiery coloured ribbons

Explain to the children that this storytelling will involve all of us participating with our whole bodies. If they are able, encourage them to mime appropriately as you tell the story but provide some leader support, as necessary, to initiate appropriate actions as you tell the story. Gather the children together, standing in the centre of your space and begin.

Say: After Jesus had returned to heaven and the Holy Spirit had come upon Jesus' followers, the new Jesus followers had to work out the best way to put everything they had learned into action. The group met together often. Sometimes they would meet in small groups and other times they would meet in larger groups. *Mime gathering in groups.*

Sometimes they would meet in each other's homes, and at other times they would meet in the temple or in other public places. When they met, they would eat together. And they often shared the special meal of bread and wine, like they had shared at Jesus' last supper to remember Jesus' death and resurrection. *Mime eating together.*

The Jesus followers shared everything they had with each other, so if there was someone in the group who did not have enough food, the others would share what they had so there was always enough to go around. *Act out sharing things.*

The group would talk about the things that Jesus had taught them, like how to love God and love each other, and they would talk about the different things that Jesus had done too, like making sick people well again. They would ask God to make sick people well too, and he did! *Mime helping people get up and move around.*

Some people who were not Jesus followers saw what was going on and were amazed! They wanted to know about Jesus and they joined the group too. And so, the Jesus followers continued to grow - meeting together, eating together, sharing together, talking together, praying together, learning together and growing together. *All join hands in a circle and dance around happily.*

Together, they learned what it meant to follow Jesus and they became the early Church. I wonder: how could we be like them?

+ CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of this story?
- What did you like most about the way the early Church worked together?
- What do you like most about our church?
- What would you change about our church, if you could?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: poster paper; pens; magazines; newspaper; scissors; glue

Ask the children to work together to create a large mural that represents some of the things they have discovered about the early Church throughout this session. Encourage the children to cut relevant images of their choosing from the magazines and newspapers to stick onto the large piece of paper, or add drawings or key words of their own choice. These could include such things as people sharing a meal together or of a friendship group, but the images should be selected by the children themselves.

Once finished, display the picture somewhere the whole group can see it and talk about the completed mural. Talk about the images and invite the children to share what stands out to them from the picture. If you are able, display the mural somewhere so that the wider church fellowship can also see it.

+ PRAYER

As you gather the children together to pray, remind them that when the early Church met together, they would often pray for each other and this is something we can, and should do today too.

Help the children to share anything they would like prayer for, and model how to pray for one another, in a simple age-appropriate way, before supporting the children to do so themselves. Encourage the children to remember to pray for each other while they are at home this week. When you return next time, remember to ask the children where they have seen God answer their prayers this week.

BECKY MAY

is a writer who has worked with children and young people for many years, in a variety of different settings. She is the co-founder of The Treasure Box People.