

**BREATH OF HOPE**

(Second Sunday of Easter)

Purpose

**To explore ways we can experience God's Spirit.**

Preparation



- Read John 20:19-31 and the biblical background for May 1.
- Set up worship table with yellow/white cloth, Unit VI logo, candle, offering basket, and open Bible.
- Print the Easter acclamation on newsprint. (see Opening)
- Bring *Seasons of the Spirit* CD and CD player.
- Bring feathers of different colours and sizes (available in craft stores), at least one for everyone. Alternatively, bring squares of tissue paper.
- Have 4 tables available that can be laid on their sides as barriers. Alternatively, use chairs. Think about how the peace is passed during worship. What words does your priest/minister use? What words do people say? Bring Good News Bible.
- *Option A:* Make copies of the activity sheet "Jesus Is Risen!" Bring sharp scissors, construction paper, and coloured markers. *Optional:* Bring X-acto knives and cardboard pads to protect work surface.
- *Option B:* (This is an ongoing activity for the next 5 weeks.) Bring a large piece of felt or cotton canvas at least 36 x 48 in. (90x 120cm) and different coloured felt and fabric pieces. Bring straight pins and fabric scissors.
- Print words for the opening and closing prayers on newsprint.
- Check the birthday list.
- Pray that your group will experience God's Spirit in their midst as they learn about Jesus' appearance to the disciples.

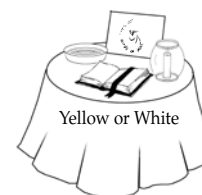
Opening

Invite a class member to **light the candle** saying, we light this candle to remind us that God is always with us.

**Welcome** everyone. Invite them to share what they did to celebrate Easter weekend. Remind them that last Sunday was the most important day of the year for Christians. It is a day that begins a season of 50 days of celebrations of Jesus' resurrection. Easter continues today and for 6 more Sundays, right through to Pentecost. It is a time of joy and celebration and saying lots of Alleluias. (*Post the newsprint sheet with the Easter Acclamation and explain that we will greet each other this way all through the Easter Season.*)

**Easter Acclamation****Teacher:** Alleluia, Christ is risen!**Class:** Christ is risen, indeed!**All:** Alleluia!**Sing:** "Alleluia!" #8 *Seasons of the Spirit* CD (vol. 9)**Attendance, Birthdays, Offering**

**Prayer:** God, help us feel the excitement of the Easter season, excitement about the good news of Jesus' resurrection. And help us feel your presence, as we sit with the disciples, experiencing your Spirit with them and with us today. Amen.

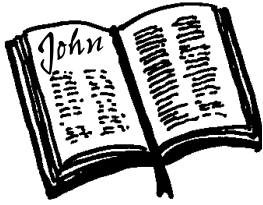


Introducing the Theme

**The Great Feather Race**

Have group members stand side by side in a row, each with a feather. On the count of 3, have them blow their feather to the other side of the space. Do it 2 or 3 times. Then gather everyone together. Ask them to imagine that you're from another planet and want to know what made the feathers move. Ask them to explain it. (*Question them about what breath is and note that you can't see anything.*) What are other things that we can't see but know exist? (*e.g. atoms, the ozone layer, God*) There were many things about Jesus' appearances to his disciples after his resurrection that were very difficult to explain to others. It seemed as if they each had to experience his presence for themselves.

Exploring  
the Theme



### A Locked Room

*(Together set up barriers leaving space inside for everyone to sit together on the floor with you in the middle, within reach of everyone. Bring a Bible with a marker at today's reading.)* Welcome to the locked room. Close your eyes and imagine that you're one of the disciples. You're tired and bewildered. What a day! You started off lost in grief at Jesus' death, confused about what would happen next. All of sudden, Peter and another disciple came running in saying that Jesus' body was gone! Then, Mary came running in saying she'd seen Jesus! He's alive! You don't know what to think.

### Experiencing Scriptures through Our Senses

You're feeling really nervous—what if the religious leaders or the Romans find out that you were friends of Jesus? Might they crucify you too? You sit huddled together, with the door locked, not sure what's happening in the world outside. With your eyes still closed, listen to what the Gospel of John describes as happening next. *(Read **John 20:19-31** slowly. Stop before verse 22. Blow gently or fan air on each participant's head or hand before continuing to read. After, let the group sit quietly and then invite them to open their eyes.)*

### Experiencing God's Spirit

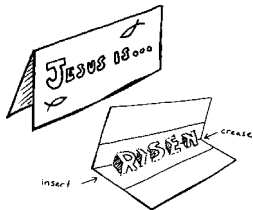
What did it feel like to imagine yourself as a disciple? Have you ever experienced being afraid and wanting the doors locked? *(Some may talk about being at home alone afraid of unusual noises. If you have a member who is a refugee or immigrant they might have other stories. Listen with respect.)* How do you think it felt suddenly to see Jesus when you thought he was dead? How do you think it felt for the disciples when Jesus breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit? What words do you think they used to tell their friends and families about it? How do you think Thomas felt, hearing about all that he missed? What experience would be most powerful for you—the experience of seeing Jesus and feeling the Spirit, or like Thomas, seeing and touching Jesus' wounds? Why? *(Look at the Unit VI logo)* How does this reflect the story we read today?

### God's Spirit Today

Today's Bible story tells us how the disciples experienced God's Spirit and we imagined experiencing it in the past. But we can experience God's Spirit today, in all sorts of ways. One time that we regularly share the experience is in worship when we share the peace. *(Talk about how your church does this—the words and gestures that are used. Then encourage group members to share the peace with each other following your congregational tradition or they could simply shake hands with each other, saying, "God's Peace be with you.")* What are some other ways we experience God's Spirit in our lives? (e.g. through a hug or kind word, through the beauty of nature, when we sense what God would want us to say or do) How can we help others to experience God's Spirit? (e.g. when we share, when we do or say something that makes someone feel loved, by praying for others)



Integrating  
the Theme



### Option A: Act It Out!

Divide into small groups of 2 or 3. Invite the groups to think up situations where people experience God's Spirit. (e.g. today's Bible reading; someone being picked on and someone else realizing they could help by being kind; 2 children listening and comforting each other) Then ask each group to prepare to act out one of them. Have the groups present their skits to each other.

### Option B: Jesus Is Risen! Card

*(Hand out the activity sheet "Jesus Is Risen!")* Make a pop-up card by following the instructions. Take your card home and place on a coffee table or shelf as a decoration for the Easter season, or give it to someone who has helped you experience God's Spirit.

**Option C: God's Spirit Banner** *(This activity continues each week.)* Let's celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the disciples' joy at seeing him again by making a big banner. We'll start it today by cutting out the letters for the words "God's Spirit Is Here!" *(Divide into groups to draw and cut out the letters from fabric or felt. Make the letters big enough to be read from a distance. Suggest some feathers also be set aside to be attached to the banner as symbols of the disciples' experience of God's Spirit. In subsequent weeks group members will make symbols and more words. Pin today's letters in place. Everything can be rearranged and glued in the final week. This banner could be part of the processional on Pentecost Sunday and/or hung on a wall.)*

Closing

**Prayer:** Thank you, God,  
for the gift of your Spirit  
to the disciples and to us.  
Help us to be open to your Spirit  
moving among us. Amen.

# Jesus Is Risen!

## Instructions

1. Fold a sheet of construction paper in half (so the shorter sides meet) to make a card.
2. Print in large letters "Jesus is..." on the outside of the card.
3. Cut out the insert below (with the word "RISEN"). Fold it in half to make a definite crease across the middle of the letters.
4. Cut the sides of the letters on the dotted lines only.
5. Put a line of glue around the edges of the insert and between the letters. Be careful not to get any glue on the letters themselves.
6. Open up the card and glue the insert to the inside, centering the word "RISEN" and aligning the fold line of the insert with the fold line of the card.
7. When the glue has dried, carefully push out the cut-out edges of the letters "RISEN" and squeeze the crease to make them pop up when the card is opened.
8. Decorate the front and inside of the card using markers.

