Introduction:

The Christian holy day of Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Easter Sunday. Pentecost, is also called Whitsun. Whitsun is thought to derive from the Anglo-Saxon word 'wit', meaning 'understanding', to celebrate the disciples being filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. So, Pentecost or Whitsun is the day when we celebrate the Holy Spirit being given to Jesus’ followers.

Background:

Before Jesus’s death, he had told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come after him: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:16–18.

Christians believe in the Holy Trinity, which is made up of God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. Three in one and one in three.

The Bible story:

The Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ were sheltering, waiting patiently together, in Jerusalem, as Jesus had requested. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a strong wind filled the whole house and they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire coming down to rest on each of them. But these flames did not burn them.

Jesus’ followers felt filled with joy and they began to speak in tongues. They found they could talk in different languages. This was a sign that they would be able to go and take the Good News about Jesus and the Kingdom of God to all peoples and nations. The Apostles would travel to new countries
and cities, trying to live their lives as Jesus had asked them to. They kept faith even in the face of persecution and fear. They lived in fellowship, one with another, preaching, teaching and performing miracles, thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit which had filled and comforted them.

This is described in the Acts of the Apostles (Bible Reading: Acts 2: 2–12)

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? … we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’

Things to do at home - a few ideas:

- Colour, cut out and make the Pentecost Pop Up. Use paper glue to attach the tabs.

- How many shades of red, orange and yellow can you create? Use one sheet of paper to experiment with colour mixing. Next, take a clean sheet and use your favourite different shades to make a painting or coloured picture of tongues of fire.

- Find out, as far as you can, approximately how many languages there are in the world. Some are only spoken languages but most languages also have a written form. Not all languages use the alphabet that we use (called the Roman alphabet because it was used to write Latin).

- How many languages and alphabets are used within your family? Most people in the world speak at least two languages and many use at least two alphabets as well. Using the internet, discover some new alphabets. Now, perhaps you can figure out what your first name might look like in a different alphabet. Next, try to learn a few words in this or any other new language.

- Find Jerusalem on a map of the world and then explore Jerusalem as it may have looked in the time of Jesus and his followers: http://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-jerusalem/