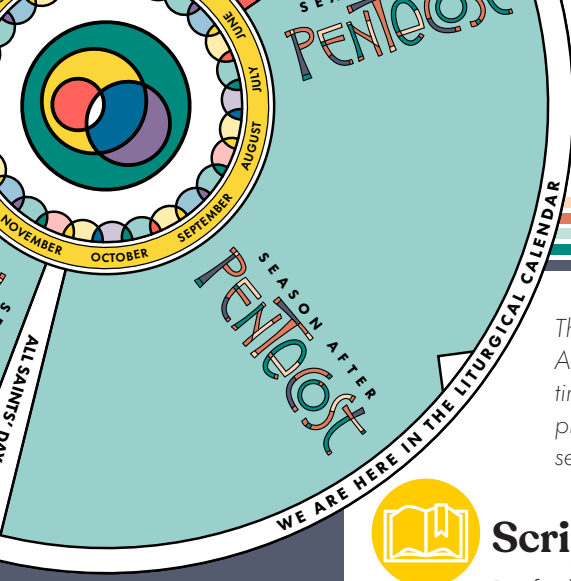


Hebrews 11:29–34, 12:1–2

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday between August 14 and August 20



The Season after Pentecost is the period between the Day of Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent. This season makes up half of the calendar year, and its liturgical color is green. It is a time to focus on the life and growth of the Church in the world, empowered by the gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit. 12th-century mystic Hildegard von Bingen captured the essence of this season when she wrote, "The Holy Spirit is the greening power of God. Our task is to blossom."



Scripture

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.



Questions

- This story reminds us of many other stories in the Bible that have been passed down. What Bible characters and stories have been passed down to you?
- By telling these stories, what do you imagine the writer wants the listeners and readers to do?
- We are in the season after Pentecost when we learn how to follow Jesus in faith. What can we learn about what practicing faith looks like from the stories of the Israelites, Rahab, and Jesus?
- What ways can you practice following Jesus at school, home, or in your community, even when it feels hard or scary?
- Think about the people in your life and the stories of your/our ancestors. Who would be in your "great cloud" of people or witnesses? Why?

Look it Up!



Become a meteorologist and look up how clouds are formed. There are many different types of clouds in the sky. They all have one thing in common: they're made of a great number of water droplets, not just one!

mini
REVOLUTIONS





Activity

Introduction for both activities: *When you look up at the clouds in the sky, have you ever wondered what clouds are made of? Clouds are made when warm air heats water, turning it into water vapor and causing it to rise until it cools into a cloud in the sky. The water may come from a newly formed source, like a puddle, or an older source, like a lake or ocean.*

While our "cloud of witnesses" are not literal clouds in the sky, they have something in common. Much like real clouds, our clouds of witnesses can expand. For example, church or school friends we've just met, neighbors we're getting to know, older relatives, ancestors who inspire us, pastors, and teachers can be added to our clouds.

Materials:

Paper
Coloring utensils
Cotton balls and/or tissue paper

We can make an artistic representation of our clouds of witnesses full of those who inspire and guide us in our faith. On a sheet of paper, write your name in the middle. Next, think of friends who help you in hard times: people from school, your neighborhood, church, or anywhere. Write their names or draw a picture of them. Then, think about those who teach and support you: family members, church leaders, community folks, or others who help guide you. Write their names or draw them as well. Finally, think about those who aren't with us but inspire your faith. Maybe they're historical, Biblical figures, family members, or friends who have died. Write their names or draw them, too.

When you're done, decorate your paper with cotton balls and/or tissue paper. Once completed, hang it up and say the ending prayer.

Alternate Activity

Materials:

Water
Plastic bottle with cap
Matches

Remembering our cloud of witnesses can be helpful because it reminds us we are not alone. It helps us keep going and stay strong in faith because our friends, family, classmates, church leaders, and even ancestors care for us and continue to support us as we seek to follow God.

Let's take a moment to pray for those who are in our clouds of witnesses. The adult leader will take the plastic bottle and fill it $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way with water, screw the top on. Shake the bottle, then take the cap off. Next, light a match, drop it into the water, and screw the lid tightly onto the top of the bottle. This creates the conditions to make a cloud in a bottle.

Whenever the leader squeezes the bottle, a cloud will form as you release. Have the group say a prayer by naming people in their cloud of witnesses. Every time someone says a name, squeeze and release the bottle to create a cloud for that person.

If the cloud runs out, light another match and repeat the exercise until everyone is done.



Micropractice

When you are struggling with a task or feeling overwhelmed, pause for a moment. Remember your cloud of witnesses. Breathe in their encouragement and kindness and breathe out your anxiety. You do not struggle alone.

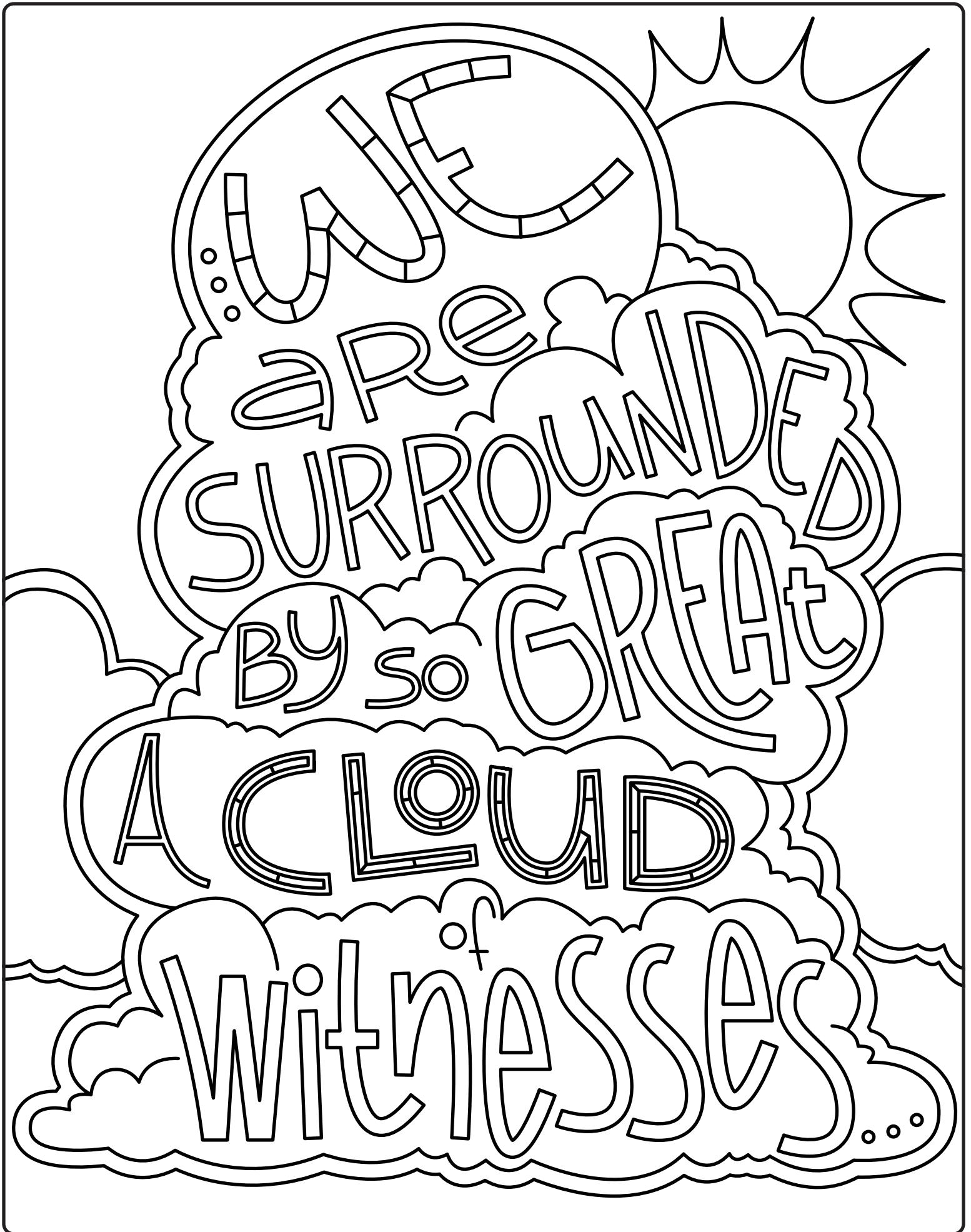


Download a graphic to share with your community and on social media. You can download it here: illstrdm.in/minirevCPentecost10



Prayer

God of the ages, we know we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses made up of those who came before us. Thank you for these ancestors. Bless us with their wisdom, courage, and faith as we live our lives. Amen.



4. Remember when Jesus died, was buried, and came back to life? Even Jesus clung to hope and trusted in God, creating new life for us all. My dear siblings, don't give up on life. We can do this together.



3. When life is hard and scary, it helps to tell the stories of our ancestors and remember we are not alone. We are surrounded by a great cloud of people who experienced the same worries, fears, and questions we do.

1. Siblings of faith, do you remember when our ancestors escaped enslavement in Egypt by walking across the sea on dry land? Imagine their courage and trust in God as they saw the giant walls of water swirling around them!



2. Do you remember the story of Rahab from Jericho, who risked her life to welcome two spies from Israel into her home? She helped them escape the king's soldiers because she had hope and curiosity in something greater than herself.