

God sends help

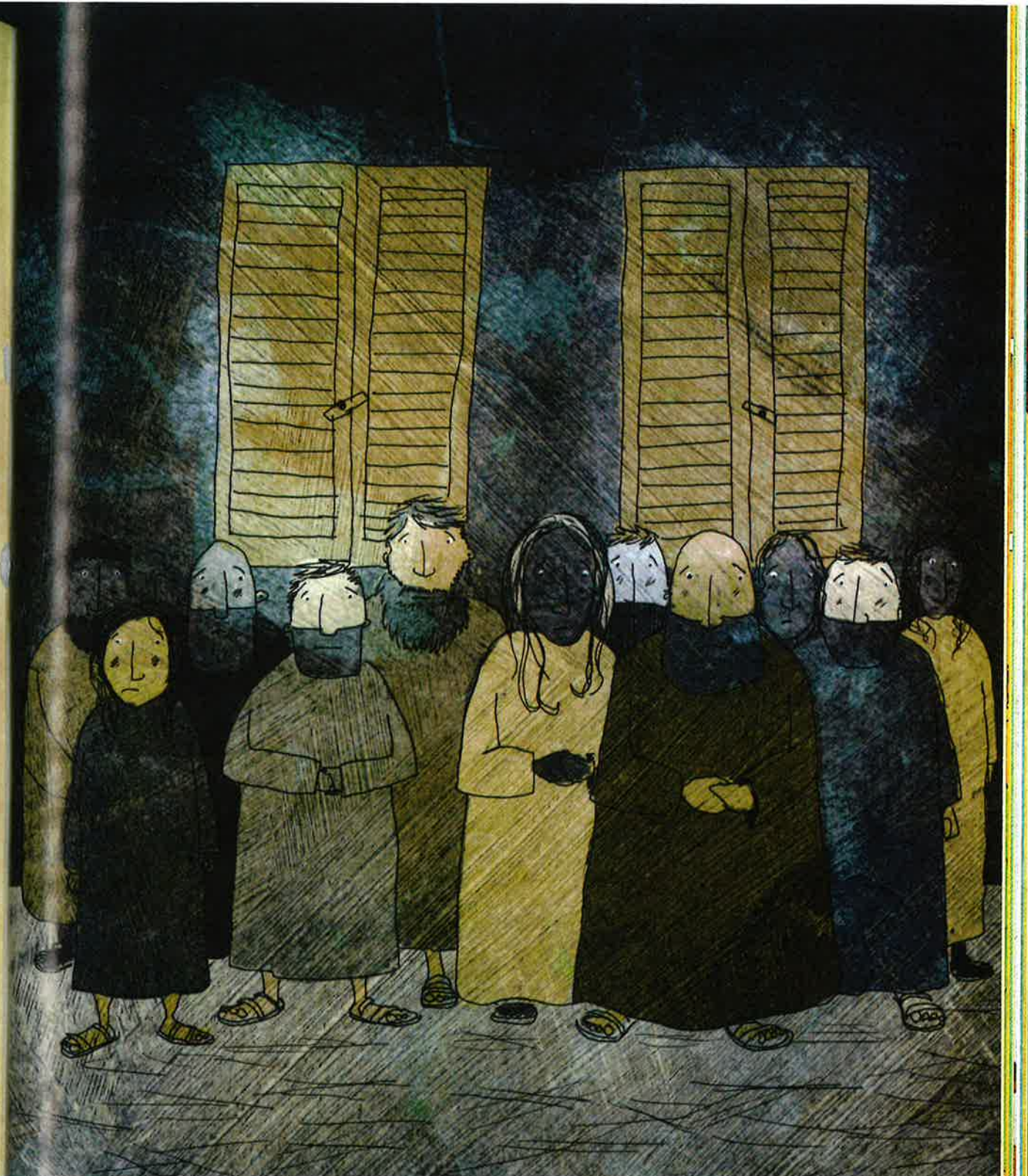
Pentecost, from Acts 1–5; John 15

JESUS' FRIENDS AND HELPERS huddled together in a stuffy upstairs room. Even though it was sunny outside, the shutters were closed. The door was locked.

“Wait in Jerusalem,” Jesus had told them, “I am going to send you a special present. God’s power is going to come into you. God’s Holy Spirit is coming.”

So here they were. Waiting. Actually, mostly what they were doing was just being scared and hiding. (You can’t blame them – their best friend had left; the Important People and Leaders were after them; and Jesus had given them a job they didn’t know how to do.)

As they waited, they were praying and remembering — remembering how, from the beginning, God had been working out his Secret Rescue Plan.





Suddenly, a strong wind filled the little room, whistling through the walls, rustling the straw on the floor. And there — on everyone's heads, shining in the gloom — were flickering flames. Fire that didn't hurt or burn.

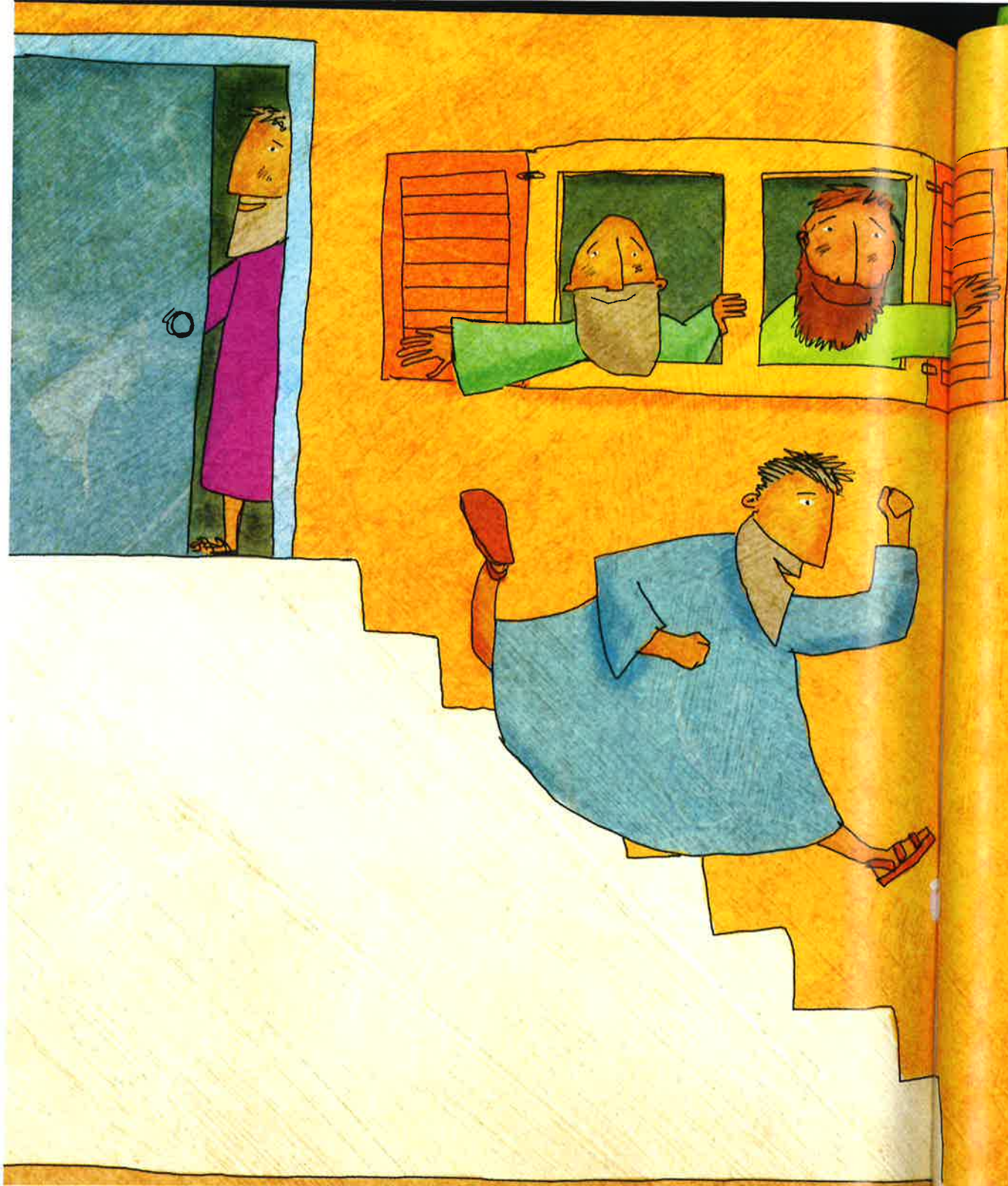
And something more: inside, in their hearts, they felt a strange heat, almost as if all the coldness and hardness were melting away. As if their broken hearts were mending. And God was giving them brand new hearts — hearts that could work properly.

How it happened they didn't know, but they knew God's power had struck their hearts ablaze — and Jesus himself was coming to live inside them.

They had seen Jesus go away, but now he was closer than he had ever been — inside their hearts. And this time nothing could ever separate them. Jesus would always be there. With them. Loving them. Whispering the promise that would get rid of the poison and the terrible lie and the sickness in their hearts. God's wonderful promise to them: "You are my child. And I love you."

"Make your home in me, as I make my home in you," Jesus had said.

Could it be? Heaven was coming into their hearts.



They threw open the shutters. Sunlight flooded their room, as love had flooded their hearts. And the little room was filled with happy noises. Dancing feet, singing, laughing.

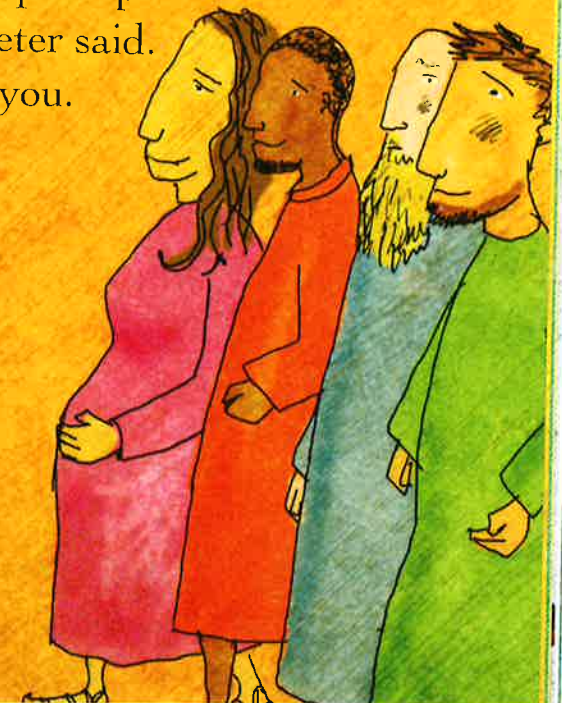
They unlocked the door and surged out into the streets — as if they had never been afraid.

Peter spoke in a loud voice, so everyone could hear: “Jesus died for you!” he said. “Because he loves you. But God made him alive again. He has rescued you!”

People stopped. And listened. The words sank down deep into their hearts and worked like a medicine that makes you well. Like the antidote to a deadly poison. Like a kiss that wakes you from a deep sleep.

“Stop running away from God!” Peter said. “Run to him instead! So he can love you. And make you free!”

And Peter told them the wonderful Story of God’s Love — God’s Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love. How Jesus had come. All that had happened.



There were lots of people from faraway countries in Jerusalem. They couldn't speak the same language but as they listened to Peter, everyone could understand what he was saying — in their own languages!

Many people believed. And became Jesus' new friends and helpers. And the wonderful news of Jesus spread. Like sparks from a fire. To villages. Towns. Cities.

Every day, more and more people believed.

And so it was that the family of God's children, his special people, grew.

One man was watching. "I'll stop this!" Saul said.

But this was God's Plan. And nothing in all the world would ever be able to stop it.

