

# Stokesley Methodist Church



**Sunday 20th May, 2018**

*Welcome to Worship – Pentecost Sunday  
Church Anniversary*

10.30am Morning Worship led Rev Andrew Robinson,  
Including the Sacrament of Holy Communion  
6.00pm Town Close with Vanessa Johnson

## **A Gathering Prayer from the Roots Resources**

Breathe, O God, your Holy Spirit into our mortal being;  
give life and verve and dynamism to our love of you;  
kindle the flame that we may radiate the love and glory of your  
being.

Drawn by the power of your Holy Spirit, we come to worship.

We come in awe and wonder.

We come with joy and celebration.

We come because you bid us come,

you call us to kneel before you,

you guide us and reassure us that you are our God

and we are your people.

**Amen.**

## **Lectionary Readings:**

**Acts 2 v1-21** The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

*“Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”*

**Psalm 104 v24-34, 35b**

*“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”*

**Romans 8 v22-27** Future Glory

*“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”*

**John 15 v26-27; 16 v4b-15** The World Hates the Disciples/The Work of the Holy Spirit

*“But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”*

## *Life After Jesus*

Today we see how Jesus will send the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, to testify on his behalf, and, guided by the Spirit, the disciples will continue the testimony to the world. The Spirit will glorify Jesus and instruct the disciples about what is still to come.

The reading from Acts tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, shortly after the ascension of Jesus. Pentecost (from the Greek meaning ‘fiftieth day’) came 50 days after Passover, and is also called the ‘Feast of Weeks’ – an agricultural festival that came between Passover and Tabernacles. It is not entirely clear who is included in the disciples’ shared experience, nor where it happens. It simply says that ‘they’ are together in a house. Luke’s imagery should not be taken too literally as there is a play on the word *pneuma* – it means breath and wind and spirit. Breathing is the sign of life, and receiving God’s Spirit makes us alive. So, a gust of wind (breath) is an appropriate image for the Holy Spirit. Fire

represents the presence of God, just as it did for Moses at the burning bush.

Luke says that people 'speak in other languages', but this is not the same as the phenomenon that Paul describes as 'speaking in tongues' (1 Corinthians 14) – the latter is a way of praising God that is largely unintelligible and requires interpretation. This difference becomes clear in the Temple courtyard. Pilgrims have gathered for the Feast of Weeks from all over the Jewish diaspora, but they can all understand – in their own language – these Aramaic-speaking Galileans. Even though it is early in the morning, some think the disciples are drunk and, while having the Holy Spirit can involve more modest forms of praising God, this incident certainly comes across as an extreme and intoxicating experience. Paul's lengthy reflection on those who 'live according to the Spirit' (Romans 8.1-27) is clear that they (we) have only the first fruits of the Spirit. There is more to come and, like the rest of creation, we groan as we await what he calls 'the redemption of our bodies' – presumably the final resurrection of the body. Even now, we still do not know how we should pray, but Paul offers the reassurance that the Spirit prays on our behalf when we are unable to do so. He calls those to whom he writes 'saints'; that is, people who are – or who aspire to be – holy. Even so, it is all still a matter of hope, something unseen; but Paul assures us of the presence of the Spirit to guide and lead.

How should we translate John's *paraklētos* (see the reading from John's Gospel)? In the NRSV it is 'Advocate'. In other translations it can be Counsellor, Comforter, or simply transliterated as 'paraclete'. It is John's word for the Holy Spirit, and literally it means someone who will plead your case in a law court – hence Advocate. For John, the 'paraclete' is the one who will speak up for us when we appear before God the Father. This Advocate is

characterised as the Spirit of truth. It testifies about Jesus. It will prove the world (of unbelief) wrong about sin, and righteousness, and judgement. It will guide the disciples into truth. It will declare the things that are to come. And it will glorify Jesus. As the Advocate cannot come until Jesus has gone away, it means that the Holy Spirit is to be understood as the continuation of Jesus' presence on earth and in the church after Jesus has gone away. Here we have the beginning of the idea of the one God as a Trinity of persons.

Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, to the disciples in Jerusalem after the ascension, and in Acts this is illustrated by fire, wind and speaking foreign languages. It fulfils the promise of Jesus in today's Gospel reading. Paul, meanwhile, tells us that this is just the beginning of our final redemption.

### **Sending Out Prayer**

Almighty God, you have given us such wonderful gifts;  
you have inspired us and moved us, challenged and changed us;  
you have loved and supported and cared and upheld us.  
Send us out like living flames and comforting winds  
to move among our family, friends and neighbours.  
Send us out with the gift of your Holy Spirit  
and the truth of the risen and ascended Jesus.

**Amen.**