

Stokesley Methodist Church



Sunday 19th January 2020

9.00am The Filling Station

10.30am Morning Worship led by Rev Richard Bradshaw

6.00pm Evening Worship at Town Close led by David Sills

A Gathering Prayer from the Roots Resources

Thank you, God, for your gifts of grace and peace –
which we celebrate today.

For your gifts of strength and courage –
which we celebrate today.

For gathering us together in this place –
where we celebrate today.

For welcoming us into your church family –
where we are united today.

God of the Church, you have put a new song on our lips.

You have raised us up and called us to be your people – and our desire is to do your will.

So, with our whole heart we proclaim your faithfulness, love and truth.

In Jesus' name. **Amen**

Lectionary Readings:

Isaiah 49 v1-7 (p735) The Servant of the Lord

Psalms 40 v1-11 (p566) He put a new song in my mouth

1 Corinthians 1 v1-9 (p1144) Thanksgiving

John 1 v29-42 (p1064) Jesus the Lamb of God/Jesus' First Disciples

An Encouraging Start

This week our focus is on what it means to be church.

Paul opens with a greeting to the Christians in Corinth and compliments them for their belief.

Do you like to read? What fun and what a joy books are! Think about the things that might happen when we read - we go on adventures, we visit new places, we learn about people who live in different countries and have different customs and habits from our own, we find new friends and discover imaginary creatures like dragons, fairies, and strange animals, we sail the seas or become an astronaut and travel in space.

Reading enriches our lives with new words and ideas. The key word is enrich. To enrich something means to make it richer - to make it better.

The Apostle Paul speaks about this word in the Bible. He gives thanks to God for Christians living in Corinth because "in everything" they were enriched by Jesus "in all your speaking and in all your knowledge" (1 Corinthians 1:5).

We learn that Christ Jesus enriches lives. He makes our lives better. As Christians we learn new ways of living that help us every day. Books enrich us, make us better, teach us new things, and give us pleasure. The same thing can be said of our faith in Christ Jesus. Accepting God's love enriches our lives in every way.

We like watching ballerinas dance because they are so graceful. We see grace in the way a ballerina moves. Everything about her is just right – toes pointed correctly, hands and arms lifted in a graceful way. Her hair is pulled back to expose her face and she often wears a costume light as thistledown. Her body bends and twirls, and she jumps as if she floats on air. A famous painter named Degas painted many pictures of ballerinas because they are so lovely in the way they stand and move about – they have such grace. In this reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks about grace. He wrote to the Christians living in Corinth, “I always thank God for you because of his grace of God given you in Christ Jesus”. We discover, from this Bible verse, that God offers us His love and grace through Christ Jesus. When we accept God’s love we learn to move about in the world in a more graceful way. This happens as we learn how to treat others respectfully, how to be forgiving, how to love others even when they don’t deserve it.

We may not be ballerinas, but we can choose to become more loving and forgiving; to become more graceful like a flower moving in the wind or a kite swaying in the breeze. The Bible teaches us that Christ Jesus gives us grace to live our lives with honesty and beauty.

We recognize people in many ways. Our family members are easy to recognize. We are familiar with their faces and certain items of clothes that they wear. We recognize the way they comb their hair, the way they walk and motion with their hands, the way their voice sounds. People we feel close to may even have a distinctive fragrance, like special cologne, or the smells that come from cooking or working in the garden.

Sometimes we are given clues that help us recognize people who are not familiar to us. These clues may tell us something about who a particular person is or what he or she does.

If you see a young person carrying a backpack near a school there is a pretty good chance that person is a student. You can recognize a fireman or a policeman by the uniform they wear. A man or woman with a stethoscope around the neck is likely to be a doctor or a nurse. A person carrying a musical instrument is probably a musician. Can you think of other ways you recognize people?

In the Bible John the Baptist tells us how he was able to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. John said, “I saw the Spirit come down from Heaven as a dove and remain on him.” (John 1:32). John goes on to say that he had been told by God, “I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me. The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.” (John 1:33). And again John says, “I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God” (John1:34).

God sent a sign, gave the world a clue so Jesus could be recognized as the Son of God. This sign, this clue that first came in the form of a dove, is the Holy Spirit. It is the part of God that lives in us and teaches us to recognize what is true. It is that quiet knowing inside of us that helps us make good choices and leads us to recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

A Sending Out Prayer:

May we know Jesus’ presence in our hearts and in our lives – whenever we gather together, whenever we leave & go our separate ways, wherever we go, whatever we do, whoever we meet. May we know God’s presence in our hearts and in our lives, now and always.

Amen.