

For the Apostle Paul the Holy Spirit was fundamental to living and being Jesus' Church; he said to the Ephesians; "Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything." To the Galatians he gave the command, "Live by the Spirit". Centuries on from the Church's Independence Day as the present day successors of those first disciples our need for the comfort, counsel and help of the Holy Spirit is just as fundamental and as essential. We face disruption and turmoil through the action of a virus rather than through the persecution of a jealous, imperial power that could only accept one Lord. Although in Britain we do not face violent opposition to the Church and its witness to Christ and his love, we do live in a culture that sees the Church and its message as increasingly irrelevant, and increasingly inconvenient. And remember Jesus' promise of the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit still stands; we can claim that promise at any time.

We need to pray for the Spirit's power to help us be Jesus' body today; witnessing to him and his love. And let us claim that promise of the Spirit from Joel, quoted by Peter in the first Pentecost sermon, where he speaks of old men dreaming dreams when the Spirit comes. Let us dream in the Spirit of how the Church will be in the future, and then seek his counsel and power to make it happen.

DO MAKE USE OF OUR WEBSITE We do have a website for THE STODDEN CHURCHES. If you are looking for service information you will find it there. Please make use of it, and it is somewhere you can suggest people look for information who are new to the area or the congregation

VIRTUAL COLLECTION PLATE: If you wish to be able to give electronically here are the Stodden Churches bank detail: Stodden account number 10842168 sort code 20-74-81

VIRTUAL CHURCH: If you want to "virtual worship" users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches and the Church of England will be improving AChurchNearYou.com in the days ahead to make this clearer. There is **Prayer for the day** - each day the Church of England publishes audio and text of the Prayer for the Day. There is the BBC daily service and Sunday worship also available on BBC Sounds.

PHONE CHURCH: Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

The Stodden Churches Prayers and Readings for the week beginning Sunday 31st May 2020 - Pentecost

Our Vision Statement: As the Stodden Churches we seek to move forward together in love and service, sharing the good news of Christ with our neighbours

From the Stodden Villages lease remember in your prayers : Teresa Allan, Pauline McManus, Steve Lemming, Trish Sizer, Frances Bratcher, Andy Langley, Andrew Seabrook, Rosemary Morgan, Anne Hauxwell. *If someone would like a visit or a prayer tell Stephen the Rector (709740)*

This week's Psalm: 100

¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

² **Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.**

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ **Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.**

⁵ For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

The 1st Reading: Acts 2:1 -5, 12-21: When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.' ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and

addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The 2nd Reading: John 16:7-15: Jesus said; ⁷"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate* will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about* sin and righteousness and judgement: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. ¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Pentecost Reflection: The festival of Pentecost is one of the most important of Christian festivals; it ranks with Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. Unlike the other two festivals Pentecost is not about Jesus, but rather about what Jesus promised; the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus put a strong emphasis on the place of the Holy Spirit in his disciples' lives because he knew that in the second phase of their discipleship they were going to have to go on without him. That second phase of discipleship for those first called was to become and be the Church; to be Jesus' body in the world witnessing to his love. Almost the last words Jesus spoke to his disciples before he left them at his Ascension was to say that they were to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." To be a witness was to be a witness to the truth that is the crucified, risen Jesus Christ, and also a witness to the love of God incarnated and lived out in

the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Everything the disciples had done up to this point had been done with Jesus' counsel and help through his being with them; from now on they were going to be on their own; or were they?

Jesus put such a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit because through the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling his disciples he would still be able to counsel and help them. He, through his promised Holy Spirit, could counsel and sustain them in their witness to the truth that is the crucified, risen Christ, and help them through his power to witness to the love of God in Jesus by living that love out with boldness and courage in the face of determined opposition. That is why Jesus said to his disciples on the eve of his Crucifixion; "When, he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." A little earlier, in the same teaching, he says; "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth...you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans."

Pentecost is so important because we celebrate how Jesus kept his promise and sent his Holy Spirit on his first disciples so they could become and be his Church to the world; to live as his body witnessing to his love. So Pentecost also marks the day the Church began, the very same Church that we are members of today. For all Christians of whatever denomination Pentecost is rather like July the 4th is for Americans; it is Independence Day. From that moment of the coming of the Holy Spirit on those disciples Christianity was no more an obscure sect made up of some Jews who thought that one of their number was the Messiah but a whole new religion that was not exclusive but inclusive, loving rather than judgmental, and that promised new life for all, not based on keeping rules or placating a capricious god, but rather on a crucified, risen Saviour who was the very embodiment of the God of love.

The Church began on the first Pentecost, and as each new generation of disciples has come along it has continued witnessing to the truth of the crucified, risen Christ, and to the love of God in Christ. The early Church post that first Pentecost grew incredibly fast, reaching across the Roman-Greek world of the Mediterranean in a matter of years; from a group of about a hundred and twenty in Jerusalem to a Church that had arrived even within the Imperial Capital of Rome challenging the lordship of Caesar with the lordship of Christ. That early church faced great opposition and difficulty, and yet persevered and overcame because none of those first Christians forgot Jesus' promise of the comfort, counsel and power of the Holy Spirit. As new Christians joined the growing Church, as they were baptised into the Lordship of Christ, they also prayed for and received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

