

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

PENTECOST – THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ACTS 2:1-21 Judith Allebon, w/c 31st May
The birth of the Christian Church.

This momentous, mystical, marvellous moment of Birth of the Church is so well known to all of us. We can tell others the details we know, without turning to the text, it is central to our Christian life. Studying this passage takes us deeper and deeper into the astonishing way in which God's word is woven through the centuries.

The gift of The Spirit is intrinsically linked with one of the great Jewish Pilgrim celebrations. Once again, we find God giving all the world a gift, a challenge and a task at a moment of birth or re-birth. Jesus was born into a bustling Bethlehem, crowded with people from all across the region. He died, our gift of redemption, in Jerusalem, at Passover, when the city was full of visiting celebrants. Fifty days later, people flocked from far and wide to observe the Festival of Shavuot. or God's gift of the Law.

The apostles met to pray together, quite possibly in the same Upper Room in which the 12 disciples had joined Jesus for the Last Supper. They were accompanied by one hundred and twenty of Jesus' followers, both men and women including Jesus' mother and brother. (Acts 1.14). Jesus had prophesied that The Believers would receive "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name (John 14.26).

Read and re-read ACTS 2:1-21

They were not to know at that point that this would be a moment of re-birth or re-affirmation and the birth of The Christian Church. The dramatic arrival of the Holy Spirit empowered some, or all, of those present to communicate God's Word to a very diverse gathering, using contemporary languages or dialects. Thousands were converted and baptised on that day, a momentous point of re-birth. Peter addressed the crowds, reminding them of the ways in which The Spirit had revealed God's Truth across the ages.

Peter and his fellow believers took up God's challenge of accepting the gift of the Spirit in our lives and the task of declaring the redemptive love of God, leading to Life Eternal, to all the world.

Reflections:

- 1 The celebration of Pentecost has been marked across the world in First Communion or Baptism ceremonies or Whitsun Weddings. Think about some of your memories of Whitsun Treats. Do you have photographs to share when we can meet next?
- 2 If you enjoy art, explore on-line (and share) some of the amazing representations of Pentecost in paint, sculpture or embroidery. Music lovers may enjoy exploring YouTube, Michael Torke's three movement classical piece is exhilarating: <https://www.michaeltorke.com/pentecost> and poetry readers may enjoy Mark DeBolt's two Pentecostal poems called "Not as a dove". <https://artandtheology.org/2017/06/01/not-as-a-dove-two-pentecost-poems-by-mark-debolt/>
- 3 Think about some of your favourite hymns which connect you to this astonishing day. Let the words inspire you again with their Pentecostal significance. Do they remind you of key moments in your life?

We are not physically together for Pentecost or Trinity Sunday, but like the church of Acts we can still be "of one accord". We are united with the One Worldwide Church of Christ and the simple Upper Room in Jerusalem, the words of Jesus in our ears and filling our hearts: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20).