

For the month of June, we are going to be thinking about church. In particular we are going to be focused on the verbs related to church...

being church

doing church

building church

sharing church

living church

growing church

But not church as a verb- no churching here....

This morning with the celebration of the birthday of the church we are going to focus a bit on 'being' church.

Today the church was called into **being** and we to are continuing to **be** church.

Like the disciples we have spent the period between the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost praying together, praying for ourselves and praying for our friends and family. This has been good; this has been us being church. We need to continue to be church.

Pentecost falls during the Jewish festival of Weeks, this festival provided Jews with an annual opportunity to renew their commitment to Yahweh for another year. Some churches have an annual 'membership renewal Sunday' or pledge service, where each member of the congregation commits themselves once again to being church together in this place, as part of this community.

We have the oil of renewal, when we came forward for our anointing earlier, we made a fresh commitment to accept the Spirit of God. This is an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to being church: to being the people of God gathered in this community. The oil of chrism used for this is the oil of vocation, it is used at confirmation, ordination at those times when we commit ourselves to the purposes of God.

We do that again today. We intentionally chose to be church together.

And we don't try to do that alone, we do that with the Spirit of God to help us.

The disciples in Acts, began to speak "as the Spirit gave them ability. "

The spirit that we receive is the 'spirit of adoption'. Our acceptance of the spirit makes us children of God, part of the family. Being part of the family is a lot of what **being church** is about.

The Spirit that we have is different from the spirit of the world.

'This is the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.'

SO we have a Spirit that the world doesn't have... so how does this help us with being church.

We need to be good at recognising the work of the spirit in our lives. It could be said that it was easy of the disciples, the ability to spout forth coherently in a brand-new language is pretty remarkable. There are some of whom these obvious gifts of the spirit are still found, but not all. And for me that is not the most important way we see the work of the Spirit.

The most important work of the Spirit is the way it changes us, Paul talked about the Spirit not taking us back into slavery but freeing us from fear. Jesus talked about the spirit that will help us keep his commandments. The Spirit brings change to our way being.

“that’s the spirit” we say when to motivate someone to do better or to keep going.... maybe we need to say this to each other more often.

That’s the spirit of God at work.

How good are we at recognising the work of the Spirit. how intentional are we at noticing the prayers that have been answered.

There are lots of ways in which the words used to describe the spirit can be interpreted

fortifier

strengthenener

advocate

counsellor

encourager I like this one- giver of courage.

As Holy Cross Church I believe that we need to take hold of the spirit as encourager, giver of courage.

The action of the Holy Spirit as encourager is the one that takes us from
“I can’t” to “I did!”

I can’t take Evening Prayer.... I did take evening prayer

We can’t leave the church door open we did leave the church door open.

We can’t run messy church... we do run messy church.

We can’t pay our bills.... we did pay our bills.

We can’t grow..... we are growing

We need to allow space for the Holy Spirit to fill our gaps and take us from one place to another.

This might mean taking risks. This might mean we try things that don’t work, that’s ok. The encourager will give us courage to try and courage to stop if it’s not right.

Being church is about leaving space for the Holy Spirit to do some stuff, it is also about being intentional about recognising when she does some stuff.

In order for us to continue being the church we are called to be we each need to step into being the person this church needs us to be. A whole community of people being what they are called to be is how we become the church we are called to be.

I just want us to finish by looking at what happened at the end of the end of the Pentecost day.

The Holy Spirit came and Peter chose to respond to this by speaking out. He chose to ignore the people who were mocking and allow the spirit to move in him to do something. he didn't say I can't – he just did it.

The people listening chose to respond, some of them chose to respond positively and I do believe...
and some of them chose to mock to stay in the world of the I can't.

The Holy Spirit does not override our will but she can give us courage to take up something new; to speak out; move on; to give up on fear and to know that we are being church together.