

**PRAYING**

*Silence is kept for several minutes, to allow people to pray for the 5 people they have chosen to pray for throughout the Novena. It may be appropriate to invite people to speak those names aloud if they wish to.*

Our loving, living Heavenly Father, as we wait expectantly to celebrate the birthday of your church, we pray that we, like the first disciples, may be similarly transformed by the out-pouring and in-dwelling of your Holy Spirit. Although initially fearful, perplexed and weak, on that first Pentecost they became new men and women, amazing onlookers with their new-found courage, confidence and power. May we likewise be transformed into beacons of light, love and hope in a dark and lonely world. Amen.

*(Prayer written by Dr Roger Thornington - PTO Reader in the Canterbury Deanery)*

We meet your word with overflowing hearts, longing that others might know the joy of salvation.

*(Pause)* Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We give you thanks for the faithful telling of salvation's story through the ages.

*(Pause)* Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer to you our prayers for children and young people and their journeys of faith.

*(Pause)* Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you all who long to know themselves forgiven.

*(Pause)* Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

*We wait upon the work of your Spirit as we say the Lord's Prayer together...*

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the joy of salvation.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with new ways to tell the story of redemption.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with creativity.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with yourself.**

**DAILY WAITING**

*Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4).*

(This service is for use by individuals or groups and can be adapted to suit your context. Hymns, worship songs and additional prayers may be added as you wish. *Italic text is intended as an instruction, plain text is to be read by a leader, bold text is to be read together.* The reflection is taken from the Thy Kingdom Come 2024 Novena booklet by Bishop Anthony Poggo, Secretary General of the Anglican Communion).

**GATHERING**

*As you begin your time of prayer, take a moment of silence to remember and delight in the promise of the Holy Spirit Jesus gives to all his disciples. Read the following from John 14 together:*

**I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.**

*Make a sign of being present to God and one another – light a candle, open a Bible, share the peace...*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

**And kindle in us the fire of your love.**

Come, Holy Spirit, be with us as we pray

**And leave us not as orphans.**

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us in body, mind and spirit

**And send us out to be your presence in your world.**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

**And kindle in us the fire of your love.**

*Optional hymn or worship song.*

### LISTENING

'When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if I were dead. But He laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look – I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."

Revelation 1:17-18 NRSV

### REFLECTING

There is a story about two miners in South Africa. One was a Christian and the other an atheist. As they mined the rich seam of coal together a piece of the roof came loose and struck the atheist miner on the helmet. Afraid that the whole roof would collapse he cried out 'O God help me!'. His Christian friend smiled and replied: "There you are, I told you, there's nothing like great lumps of coal for knocking unbelief out of a man."

There are moments in our lives that make us stop and think about life's big questions. What is the meaning of it all? Is God real? Is there really heaven and, if there is, can I be sure I'm going there?

John's vision of Jesus Christ in glory shook him, shocked him, thrilled him and revitalised him. His first reaction is to 'fall down at his feet as if I were dead'. It is just like Isaiah's reaction, which he reports in Isaiah 6: "Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man."

Humanity's natural and right reaction in the presence of our holy and glorious Lord is to realise that He is holy and we are not. The life of the Lord Jesus was perfect. We read the Gospels and we just know that the one whom we meet there is wonderfully and radically different from anyone else. His is a life as it should be lived.

Realising that we are what the Bible calls sinners, those who fall short of God's standards, is not designed to be a depressing final diagnosis of what it means to be human; but rather an essential step in knowing that God has a rescue plan. That plan was Jesus; He makes an offer and gives us the choice to accept His rescue plan.

For both Isaiah in the Old Testament and John in the New, God's reaction to our need is free and full forgiveness. Isaiah has the symbol of a cleansing coal and John has the healing hand of the Lord Jesus touch and restore him. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son. He has this nicely worked out speech that he had composed in the pigsty; but then finds his father running towards him with a robe, a ring, and sandals, and he is welcomed to a party.

An African proverb says simply, 'Who forgives, wins!' The Lord Jesus who, on the cross, prayed for the soldiers who crucified Him, is the great winner and when we accept Him as our Lord then we share in His victory.

Pray that those whom you especially hold before God may come to know the joy of being welcomed to God's eternal banquet and rest in the forgiving touch of Jesus.

Psalm 103: 1-13 (NRSV)

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
**and all that is within me, bless his holy name.**
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
**and do not forget all his benefits—**
- 3 who forgives all your iniquity,  
**who heals all your diseases,**
- 4 who redeems your life from the Pit,  
**who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**
- 5 who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
**so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**
- 6 The Lord works vindication  
**and justice for all who are oppressed.**
- 7 He made known his ways to Moses,  
**his acts to the people of Israel.**
- 8 The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
**slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**
- 9 He will not always accuse,  
**nor will he keep his anger for ever.**
- 10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
**nor repay us according to our iniquities.**
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
**so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him;**
- 12 as far as the east is from the west,  
**so far he removes our transgressions from us.**
- 13 As a father has compassion for his children,  
**so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son,  
And to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now  
And shall be for ever. Amen.**