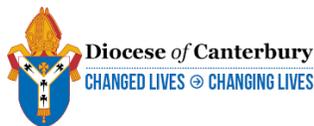


We meet your word in touch as well as speech;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We express our thanks that you hold us in the palm of your hand;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We offer to stretch out our hands to touch the outcast;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We bear before you the lonely who long for another's touch;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

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

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in
heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with your forgiveness.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the courage to admit, 'It was my
fault.'**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the generosity to forgive others.**
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.)

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.

DAY 3: SORRY

LISTENING

Jesus heals a man with leprosy

⁴⁰ A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!"

⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.
(Mark 1:40-42, NRSV)

REFLECTING

Among other symptoms, leprosy can lead to loss of feelings – numbness and also blindness. Not unlike sin, really, which can harden our hearts and make us blind to the consequence of our behaviour. In our modern society we no longer see illnesses as a curse for sin in the way that a society without science or medicine once did – though we came pretty close to this in the 1980s with the Aids pandemic.

Any disease of the skin, like leprosy, (which still exists today, but is curable), will make the sufferer desperate to be freed from disfiguring, painful sores. In this story, a leper begs for the touch of Jesus – for a reaching out, for the bridging of the gulf between two people, in care and compassion, and this is exactly how Jesus responds, reaching out to touch the man. On their way to sainthood, both St. Martin and St. Francis touched a man with leprosy, and this became a defining moment in their journey towards God, too.

Still today, we may need the touch of a surgeon in order to be healed, cutting out a tumour perhaps. To be whole, sometimes we have to sacrifice a part of ourselves, maybe our pride, like a gardener prunes a shrub or deadheads a rose-bush, to encourage healthy growth. Similarly, when we have sinned, we need to reach out and touch the other; forgiveness requires that we bridge the gulf between us and approach in penitence.

Within a family, children may often be called upon to 'kiss and make up'. How often as children were we told to 'Say Sorry!' But a sorry that you are ordered to make is no sorry at all. Similarly, at work, with

neighbours or at church we may be called upon to 'shake hands'. To kiss or shake hands, we must approach the one we have harmed. 'Social distancing' just won't do when we need to apologise. The prerequisite of all forgiveness is that we 'come clean', first with ourselves, then we should own up to the wounded person, and finally confess to God.

God is always ready to wash away our sin, shake hands with us, and help us make a fresh start. Then, knowing afresh how loved we are, we are embraced by our mother-father, washed and wrapped as in a comforting warm towel.

PSALM

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- 6 You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
(Psalm 51:1-3, 6-7, NRSV)

**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.**

PRAYING

Tender-hearted God, free us from the shadow of sin
So that we may grow tall in the sun;
Stretch out your hand, re-form us with your forgiving touch;
Straighten out our crooked corners;
Turn us from the hurt we cause and
Set us on the better path, cleansed from disfiguring sin.
Amen.