

We meet your Word, written in your creation;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We express our thanks that you lead us in the chorus of praise;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We offer you our praise in the overlooked incidents of our daily lives;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We bear before you those whose hearts are too heavy to lift in praise;
(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 life-giving breath.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with boldness to walk with you.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with daily reminders to praise you.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with yourself.**



CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES
NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021

DAILY WAITING

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

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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 1: PRAISE

LISTENING

Jesus enters Jerusalem

7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

(Mark 11: 7-10, NRSV)

REFLECTING

It's a few weeks since Palm Sunday, but I hope you still know where your Palm Cross is. Get it out now, if you can, hold it, and feel the grain under your thumb. It's a physical reminder of praise. As we inhale and exhale our breath, let us breathe in God's grace, and breathe out our fears; breathe in the Spirit, and breathe out all that holds us apart. If you can't find your Palm Cross, next time you are in a garden, or walking in a park or down a country lane, look for a twig in leaf, a stem of grass to carry, and as you walk along, imagine you are in the crowd, following Jesus to Jerusalem.

It's a few weeks since all that hullabaloo – Jesus on a donkey and the crowd going wild, the people bursting out in spontaneous uproar, as when their favourite wins Olympic gold. There were people leaping about, dancing, waving banners and branches, ecstatic in expectation. It doesn't matter if you'd have been one of the leaders out front, or one of the timid band following on behind, it would have become one of those 'I was there' moments – one to tell the grandchildren.

But life isn't generally lived in such excitement. Our moments of praise to God for the glory of creation and salvation can occur in church, but just as often when we are under God's sky, like a flower turning its head towards the sun; or sometimes when we sing hymns in the shower.

Whenever and wherever, if we listen, we can hear God join in the singing. Haven't we all learnt most keenly in this last year, how much we need to express our worship in sound and song?

Be alert to unexpected moments of praise; give up waiting for the glory of the kingfisher, the aria of the nightingale. The song of God's voice is the song of the robin, the sparrow, the pigeon – 'life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful'.

Here, at midday, pause, ponder – where and how have I joined in the praise of God this morning? This afternoon, be on the lookout for ways to praise God in the trivial moments as well as the grand gestures of life'.

PSALM

- 1 Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
 - 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
 - 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
 - 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
 - 5 Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
 - 6 Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!
- (Psalm 150:1-6, 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

Praiseworthy God, unbounded yet abiding within us,
Pulse of creation and heartbeat of compassion,
Tend the seasons of our lives, we pray.
Open the windows of our souls to welcome in your Spirit,
And open our eyes and hands to the needs of your broken and grieving world. In Jesus name,
Amen.

PRAYING

Unstinting God, You keep your promise and covenant of care. When I am depleted, You full-fill me; when I am exhausted, You give me rest; when I am half-finished, you complete me with unswerving love.

Amen.

We meet your Word in times of rest and labour;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks for all who use their hands to your glory;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you our co-operation to work within your vision;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you those who's plans have come to a full-stop.

(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 harmony with our fellow workers.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with simple-hearted gratitude.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the opportunity to rest in wonder.**

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).

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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.

CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES



NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021

DAY 2: THANKS

LISTENING

Solomon's Dedication of the Temple

²² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven.

²³ He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart,

²⁴ the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. (1 Kings 8:22-24, NRSV)

REFLECTING

Thank you is such an overused word, too easily spoken, rarely carrying weight. We aren't talking here about the 'thank you' we learnt to say when taught to mind our Ps and Qs, nor the 'thank you' of appreciation given to someone who holds the door open for us. This is more even than the 'thank you' we give when our birthday gift turns out to be what we'd always wanted but never realised, though this does get nearer the meaning.

Solomon's 'THANK YOU' is more like the one we say when we find our way home in a storm, after we were sure we were lost; or when a stranger returns the irreplaceable Stradivarius violin we left on the train; when the neighbour finds our toddler, straying on the street. It is the 'thank you' we give when we look back with steadfast faith, able to reflect on the crises of our lives, and see God has been there helping us to build up something beautiful to God's glory.

Not many of us are called to build a temple. Solomon's pledge to fulfil his father's vow took seven years, hundreds of workers and artisans, a huge variety of tools and materials, the rough and the smooth, precious gold and common cedar, dull stone and shining bronze, all contributing to the complete temple. Not to mention strong backs and great patience in the face of set-backs and foul weather. It was a test of endurance, suffered in order to glorify God.

And we are all called to build something – be it a house or garden, a family, a work team, a parish, a mature Christian life. For this we need stamina, steadfastness and patience in a crisis.

Whenever I call, Love

You're there

To listen me through

One more crisis'. (Donna Hardy, Songs to a Watchful Lover, A Journey through the Psalms, 2003, Psalm 116).

And when the crisis is over, when we see some progress towards our contribution to God's will, let's stand back and take stock of the work we have achieved in co-operation with God, with the blessing of the Spirit. Let us give ourselves a moment, when the work is complete, to sit and rest, admire the view, and confirm: 'These are thy wonders, Lord of Power' (G. Herbert, The Flower).

PSALM

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
6 The LORD protects the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
7 Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
8 For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.
9 I walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.
17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the LORD.
18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,
19 in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 116:5-9, 17-19, 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.**

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).

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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.

PRAYING

Love, you meet us uninvited and help us in apparent failure:
Come and meet us where we are. You preside at all the meals we share;
prepare, we pray, a feast for all in famine: come and feed us where we
are. You support all endeavours carried out in Jesus' name: come and
love us where we are. **Amen**

We meet your Word in the work of psalmist and poet;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks that you welcome us to the feast;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you our promise to tend your sheep;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you the work of Christian Aid, and our Diocesan Kent
Refugee Project;

(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 trust in your invitation.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the eyes to recognise Jesus in
unexpected places.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with nourishment for our souls.**

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).

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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:

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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.

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And leave us not as orphans.

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And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Optional hymn or worship song.

CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES



NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021

DAY 4: OFFER

LISTENING

Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” (John 21:4-6, 9-12, NRSV)

REFLECTING

Uninvited, unbidden, the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples on the shore of Galilee. He’s prepared the barbecue in advance – there’s a glowing fire and he’s brought fresh bread. Now all they need is more fish. Smell the firewood, see it crackling; taste the delight of new-baked bread; hear the fish sizzling on the flames.

This is an invitation – an offer – made by Love, once incarnate, now risen. Knowing our lack, Love invites us as guests, eager to nourish us. And the cycle of being fed and being called to feed others continues later in this passage, when, after the meal, Jesus sends out Peter to ‘feed my sheep’. This cycle of offering and receiving is foundational to our faith.

Here, a table is prepared by God, who offers us restoration, comfort and a place at the banquet. All these elements are included in George Herbert’s most famous poem, ‘Love III’, with its memorable first line: ‘Love bade me welcome’.

In this poem, God serves at a table for those who believe themselves to be undeserving – as Peter, in this Gospel reading, most surely knew himself to be. ‘I cannot look on thee’ says the poet; but ‘Quick-eyed God’ reminds the reluctant guest ‘who made the eyes, but I?’

It is God/Love who in this poem makes the first move, as it was Jesus who came to the disciples on the beach. The poet knows himself to be ‘unkind, ungrateful’, but Love smiles and serves the reticent sinner, reaching out and embracing us till we land on the short, stunning last line: ‘So I did sit and eat’.

Many of us, lucky enough to live in Kent, really appreciate our long, varied coast-line. As we look ahead to summer’s warmth, we will relish – this year more than ever – the chance of walking, swimming, fishing and picnicking on the beach, maybe even having a barbecue with trusted friends and family.

But what if, while you are sitting there, a ragged group of refugees washes up in an over-crowded dinghy and the poor and persecuted stumble out and come towards you. What have you to offer them?

PSALM

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
- 3 he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.
(Psalm 23:1-6, 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

We pray to our ever-attentive God, you who hear our clamour:
Open our ears to the cries of your world, and our hands to participate
in your plans; that by co-operating with your Son, we may bring
healing to those you place in our path. **Amen.**

We meet your Word in the voice of the suffering;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks for your steadfast attention;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you our prayers and actions together;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you those with 'shrivel'd' hearts';

(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 respite in the storm.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the words to speak your gospel plainly.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with patience when success seems overdue.**

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).

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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

Jesus heals a deaf man with a speech impediment

³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

(Mark 7:32-35, NRSV)

REFLECTING

We don't know how long this deaf man might have been waiting for a cure, or how much longer he'd have gone on suffering, had his friends not brought him to Jesus and 'begged'.

Maybe we'd call this more an action, or good turn, than a prayer. It's easy to keep the two separate in our minds. But in this story, the friends' action is a prayer, as are the actions of Jesus – his touch, his spit, his sigh. There is no dividing line between them.

Physical hearing loss is dreadful, but many of us with good physical hearing suffer from a more insidious loss – that of not listening with our heart and soul to God or the world around us.

Sometimes we launch into prayer and open our mouths too quickly. Whether we are praying for people or events, we should be asking God to soften our hearts and open our ears to the way we may be called to respond.

God knows the needs of all for whom we might pray; so perhaps I should be praying for the next unknown person, group, minority, or nation I will meet or hear about, that I will be shown a way to fulfil God's purposes for me in this situation.

Most often, prayer and action won't see the immediate result we read about in Mark. Praying regularly for others is more like spreading

fertilizer – enriching and strengthening us, bringing growth to our understanding and determination, until, like George Herbert, we exclaim: 'Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart/Could have recovered greenesse?'

At times of desolation, when we most need to pray, we sometimes find that's exactly when it's most difficult. Then, all we can do is sit out the winter storm 'in the shadow of your wings', till we recognize we are being called to continue. Such waiting is painful, but necessary.

Let us not be disheartened if the answer to prayer seems distant – 'It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it', (quote from Pirkei Avot, Jewish ethical teaching of the Common Era). This is the lesson that the deaf man's friends learnt well that day.

PSALM

- 1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.
- 2 I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfils his purpose for me.
- 3 He will send from heaven and save me,
¹⁰ he will put to shame those who trample on me. Selah
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.
For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.
- ¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.
(Psalm 57:1-3, 10-11, NRSV)

**Glorify 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

Constant Encourager, teach us to steady those who have lost their balance. May we grow into the still centre of calm for people in turmoil; Teach us to stretch out our arms like branches of an oak tree full of leaf, and give shade to the tired, the lonely and the lost. **Amen**

We meet your Word in prophet and apostle;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks that you enrol us in your purposes;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you our strength and energy for the tasks ahead;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you those swept away by storm and flood;

(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 strong backs.**

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

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with words of encouragement.**

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).

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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.

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NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021

DAY 6: HELP

LISTENING

A prophecy about the Messiah

¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations. They shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, NRSV)

REFLECTING

At heart, this is a list of all the different attitudes and activities we need to develop and grow in order to become helpers to another: to bring good news means we are an encourager; to bind up the broken makes us a carer; to proclaim liberty makes us a 'freedom-fighter'; to release prisoners makes us someone who unlocks another from chains; to comfort the mourners makes us a consoler; to offer a mantle of praise in place of a faint spirit means we build up another's courage. As the prophet says, if we attempt these faithfully, we will be called 'Oaks of Righteousness' and become a planting for the future.

This is the good news, prophesied by Isaiah and taken up by Jesus in Luke's recounting of Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20). What a pity Luke stopped at the end of verse two. Jesus knows this isn't a 'quick fix', but it is God's fixed will for the world that we become builders not destroyers. It may take hard work and sweat, just as a gardener who digs over the soil in spring wields a heavy spade and finds it is back-breaking work. But only by exercising our muscles will our backs become strong enough. And only by small acts of kindness can we launch ourselves into larger ones.

We may never see the oaks of righteousness reach full maturity, or the ruins that have laid devastated for centuries finally repaired. Our task may be a humbler one: 'to be a still, non-anxious presence in the world – equipped for the moment, at the place of maximum helpfulness to others'. (Brother Clark Berge, SSF).

This is a calling we must wait patiently to fulfil, in Jesus' name. So next time we feel moved to help another; next time we are swept up in a neighbour's crisis, a loved one's grief, a stranger's disaster, or a community's deprivation, let us ask ourselves: Am I being calm and collected?

What are the gifts I can employ so that I contribute to the solution, not the problem?

Where would be the place of maximum helpfulness for me to stand in this situation?

PSALM

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
- 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah
(Psalm 47:1-7, 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

Oh God, Sublime and Glorious, come and inhabit our hearts. Startle us with your glory; abide with us through good and ill. Bless us with rest in your arms, and wonder in your boundless presence. **Amen**

We meet your Word through constant prayer and worship;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks that your glory is revealed to the simple and steadfast;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you our voice to witness to your presence;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you those without a home, a hope or a purpose;

(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 understanding of our life's purpose.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with eager anticipation of your appearance.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with discipline in fasting and prayer.**

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).

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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.

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NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021

DAY 7: ADORE

LISTENING

Anna's story

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

(Luke 2:36-38, NRSV)

REFLECTING

'Oh, isn't s/he adorable!' we say, when we meet a new-born for the very first time – it slips off the tongue so naturally. But the adoration we are thinking about here is a multiplication of that emotion, one that combines worship with delight.

Anna had lived as a widow for probably fifty years, and for many of those years she was rooted and planted in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was where the Ark of the Covenant abided, the Temple was where Anna lived; it was her abode, where she fasted and prayed by day and by night, constantly worshipping God. And when the moment came that Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple, her worship of God blossomed into unbounded joy. At the moment when praise turns into adoration, 'peace will come ...; it will not be day or night as we know it, but everlasting light, boundless glory, abiding peace, and sure rest' (Thomas a Kempis). Which one of us would not long to be in Anna's shoes?

After all her waiting, there came for Anna this outpouring of adoration. The Temple had always been her dwelling place, always near the altar, where her spiritual senses joined together in harmony, receiving God's glory. Her joy could not be contained and she shared her song with all who stopped and wondered at this old woman whose face was shining with love and faith.

Picture Anna, living the simplest of lives, one that not many of us could accept. But her discipline, practice and sacrifice, her abiding and waiting all met at this moment of epiphany, and her delight was unrestrained.

We cannot all live our lives forever 'near your altar', but we can ask ourselves where is our 'thin place', the place of holiness where we feel as if we are in boundless abiding with God. Let us cultivate such a place and the discipline to return to it frequently – if only in our memory, mind's eye and imagination – a place where we too may participate in the showing forth of God. 'Thou hast a garden for us/where to bide,' George Herbert wrote in 'The Flower'. Surely that is where 'peace will come.'

PSALM

1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.
4 Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.
10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favour and honour.
No good thing does the LORD withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.
(Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12, 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

God of beautiful purposes, you overflow with life. May we complete your circle of love, holding hands with strangers and friends, excluding no-one from the song. Bring us to our feet in a dance of joy, Joining hearts and wills until, together, we accomplish your plan for creation. **Amen.**

We meet your Word in the rhythm of life's cycle;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express our thanks for the wild diversity of creation;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer you lives led in harmony with your will;

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you lands and countries threatened by the climate crisis;

(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 excitement in our faith.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with awe at signs of your presence.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with cause to celebrate.**

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).

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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

God's Word cultivates joy

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. ¹² For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
(Isaiah 55:10-12, NRSV)

REFLECTING

The month of May begins with May Day. In simpler, earlier times, this was an excuse for a day off in the village, the crowning of the May Queen, dancing around the maypole, weaving miraculous patterns in rainbow colours. And now, nearly upon us, we come to Pentecost – commonly known as Whitsun, which in living memory was much celebrated with walks and processions and picnics – so, another time for a party!

Perhaps when you hear this reading you also hear the song 'You Shall Go Out With Joy', and can picture people joining together in a circle to dance to its irresistible tune. There is much more to this reading than an excuse to dance at a party, pleasurable as that is. Our cause for celebration is focused on us being part of creation's praise to the creator, as a celebration of fecundity, new life bursting with song, not tidy or timid at all, so we should not be, either! Must we also give thanks for weeds? As we join in the song, we are compelled to celebrate our faith in our generous creator.

Next, let's celebrate 'the word', which accomplishes God's purposes, and ask ourselves how we can join in God's project. And finally, we learn that joy and peace are co-dependent – there can be no joy in a place or time of conflict.

We should ask ourselves, in humility and trepidation, what are 'God's purposes' for us and his creation at this particular time? Surely it is the urgent need for us to tackle the climate crisis, to help the healing of creation, and not its destruction. As a church, let us be part of the solution to over-consumption and pollution, and not part of the cause.

Near the end of George Herbert's poem 'The Flower', which has been accompanying us in this series of reflections, the poet reaches this wonderful understanding: 'And now in age I bud again'. Can we – tired and strained as we are, after a year like no other – proclaim this as our truth? Can we find celebration within us, even in times of illness, old age or pandemic? Can we celebrate nature's splendour, if we live in a house or flat with no garden, no birdsong, only the roar of traffic and a very long walk to the nearest park?

PSALM

- 1 Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
- 2 Let Israel be glad in its Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.
- 3 Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.
- 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with victory.
- 5 Let the faithful exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their couches.
- 6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats ...
(Psalm 149:1-6, NRSV)

**Glorify 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.**

We meet your Word in stillness too deep for speech;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We express our thanks for friends who sit with us in silence;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We offer you silent prayers for those desperate for deliverance;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We bear before you the more than three million people in the world
who have lost their lives in this pandemic;
(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 unshakeable trust in times of
distress.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with unshakeable faith in times of
crisis.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with unshakeable hope in times of
new beginnings.**
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).

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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 9: SILENCE

LISTENING

Job mourns with his friends

¹¹ Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. ¹² When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. ¹³ They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

(Job 2:11-13, NRSV)

REFLECTING

Wherever you are reading or listening to this, whether indoors or out in the open air, take a moment to calm yourself and listen to the sounds around you ...

...[*Time for silence*]

Chances are, there will be routine hums, clicks or clunks and rumbles of a radio, lawn-mowers, buses or trains. In Job's time, there would have been the women in the tents clanking bowls and talking quietly about Job's troubles, and outside, the sounds of oxen, mules and a camel or two. (What noise does a camel make?)

As Job stays still and silent, sitting among the ashes, mourning his family, three friends come 'to console and comfort him'. Then, for seven days and nights, 'no-one spoke a word to him', as Job suffered in silence. We say people 'suffer in silence' when they are stoic or courageous – or ignored. But this was a caring silence, holy moments of mourning. Consolation does not require pious words.

Passivity and waiting have a central place during mourning, but they are also positive experiences in contemplation, necessary in seasons of growth.

Returning for the last time to Herbert's poem, 'The Flower', he writes:

... flowers depart
to see their mother root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

The silence of a bulb over-wintering deep in the soil is a secret mystery of revival. Just as the bulb waits for spring, we have been waiting for the wind of the Spirit to blow us into new life. But until that time is ripe, let us pause in silence, and watch and pray ...

[*Time for silence*]

PSALM

5 For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
7 On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah
(Psalm 62:5-8, 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

God our Refuge and our Haven,
In silence, we stand before you;
In silence, we contemplate our Rock and our Salvation.
In silence, we consider the mysteries of your grace,
And share in 'the silence of eternity, interpreted by love',
Displayed in the person of Jesus, your Son, our Lord.
Amen.