

## Order of service for Morning Worship at Christchurch Sunday May 17 2020

### The Spirit beside us

#### Music before worship

Welcome to our service when we draw near to God, Father, Son and Spirit.

I should like to thank Lisa and Jeremy for providing our music this morning, also Annette England for reading and Tony Edmonds behind the scenes doing all the technical stuff.

So now be still

Be

Do not do or pretend to be, anything, just be.

Be still

Calm those anxious, unruly whirling thoughts into stillness.

Be still and know

As the flower knows the sun's rays, as the mouth knows bread

As the heart knows love, open yourself to knowing.

Be still and know that I am

Here and now, around you and within you

Behind you and before you

Wherever you are, I am.

Be still and know that I am God

Your Father and Mother, your Companion and Healer

Your Life and your all.

Be, be still, be still and know.

Be still and know that I am. Be still and know that I am God.

*Christine Odell 1990 Published by Churches Together in Britain 2002*

#### Song [This is the air I breathe](#)

#### **SoF 1562 This is the Air I breathe**

*Marie Barnett*

This is the air I breathe

This is the air I breathe

Your holy presence living in me

This is my daily bread

This is my daily bread

Your very word spoken to me

And I I'm desperate for you

And I I'm lost without you

*(Instrumental)*

And I I'm desperate for you

And I I'm lost without you (Yes I am, Lord)

And I I'm desperate for you (for you, Lord)

And I I'm lost without you

Now some words based on **Psalm 66: 16-20**

Come all who love and honour God

Let us hear what God has done for the world.

God has heard us and helped us

So come and listen.

God accepts and loves us.

Come and praise God with me.

**Let us pray**

In your love we trust, Creator God

Your love for your world

Your love for each one of us;

Your love that invites us to love others, love ourselves and to love you.

Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Gracious God we come before you

Drawn by the power of your welcoming love

We come with our sorrows and joys

We come with our expectations and apprehensions.

We come with what we have done,

We come with what we have not done,

Help us in this moment to face the things we've failed to do and mend our spirits.

Guide us by your Spirit to make the right choices,

To live in your loving freedom

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Receive our love and thanks as we receive your forgiveness, your comfort, guidance and strength through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

### Reading John 14:15-21

Jesus said, 'You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

If you love me, keep my commands.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth.

The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live in, you also will live.

On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love them and show myself to them'

### Reflection

I wonder what your plans were for the coming few weeks and months. Holidays, family celebrations, the taking of exams, special projects at work or even a new job or role. For some too it might have been the anticipation of moving house or a long planned surgical procedure. You might have noticed that I used the word **were** because so much at the present time is uncertain. We are not sure what is going to happen in the next few months to us personally or to our country or to our world.

Just think back to our reading from John's gospel. It is important to put it in context. We have to remember that Christ's words were said to the disciples before his death and resurrection. In many ways it feels as though Jesus should have been saying them after these events, which is why, I believe, they are placed in the lectionary at this time, the week before Ascension Day and 2 weeks before we celebrate Pentecost when God's Spirit filled those first disciples. But for now cast your minds back to that upper room where Jesus shared a meal with these his special friends. The night when he was later arrested and lead out to die on the cross. Jesus had been predicting his death to the disciples as they travelled to Jerusalem but so often it appears that they had no concept about what was to happen next. They must, as we say, 'have picked up the vibes' but what did they really think would happen next? Were they concerned that Jesus was going to be arrested? And if they had some understanding, did they think, that as Messiah, Jesus would be able to throw over the leaders and stand in triumph as the Chosen One of God. They had witnessed the enthusiasm of the Palm Sunday crowd. Surely what Jesus was predicting could not come true. They were uncertain as we are uncertain about what will be coming next for us.

Jesus said 'I will ask the Father and He will give you an advocate to help you and be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth'. In some versions of the Bible, the word used is counsellor. In King James Version the word is comforter, in the Message, friend is the word given. Why so many words? This is because it is difficult to sum up the breadth of what the Holy Spirit has to give us in our lives. Comforter can sound like someone who is there to give you a big hug, something that so many people who live on their own are in such need of at this time. Someone said to me recently 'I haven't been able to touch anyone for seven weeks.' God's Holy Spirit is there to comfort us, to support us, to hold us through the darkest of times – so hold onto that.

But in the time that this was translated, it had a fuller meaning. There is a section of the Bayeux Tapestry which reads 'Here Bishop Odo comforteth his men.' And what is the Bishop doing? He hasn't got an arm round his men but he is pushing them on, wielding a club in his hand. That doesn't look much like comfort to us but the bishop is staying beside his men and urging them on. And this is what the Holy Spirit is to us - yes He is beside us but leads us on too even if we are unsure of where the next step will be. And if the word counsellor seems a strange description, then let us examine what a counsellor does nowadays. It is someone who will support and help in times of crisis or anxiety or fear but also challenges thoughts and actions which are preventing us from moving on. I know that this is true from personal experience, not always comfortable and yet reassuring. So it is this dual aspect of the Holy Spirit which both supports and challenges that Jesus promises.

And this is what Jesus is sharing with the disciples 'I will not leave you as orphans - I will come to you.' I wonder if these words came to the disciples even in the darkest hours of the crucifixion. After his resurrection, Jesus would affirm what he had told them already. This coming Thursday the church celebrates Ascension Day. After Christ's ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to live in all believers. To have the Holy Spirit within us is to have Jesus himself. Living the love of Christ out in our different ways, in these strange times, knowing the comfort and challenge and as we do, growing closer and closer to Christ and reflecting more of Him to others.

*A meditation by Paul Glass – Never Alone*

There is something within us. That comes to us. All shapes and sizes of us, young and old and those in between.

There is something within us, that realizes our need, that reaches out to God, that touches the heavens.

That is the Spirit of truth.

And we know that no matter where we go or who we meet, that spirit of truth, that counsellor will be by our side.

There is something within us, gently guiding, speaking words of love and mercy and challenge.

So we will never be alone, nor friendless nor without help.

Because that spirit will be there, cradling us and protecting us.

There is something within us.

And there are those who cannot understand, who pour ridicule and scorn because they do not see, or will not open their eyes to see....

The God of love and power who is everywhere they look.

They may think we are stupid or dangerous or just plain strange.

They will attempt to make our lives difficult but we know that we have not been left alone.

And so we continue to show the love that we ourselves have been shown.

The love of the God of creation, revealed in Jesus and we do it in the power of the Spirit.

[Song More love, more power](#)

**SoF 392 More Love, More Power**

*Jude del Hierro*

More love, more power

More of You in my life

More love, more power

More of You in my life

And I will worship You, with all of my heart

And I will worship You, with all of my mind

And I will worship You, with all of my strength

For You are my Lord

More love, more power

More of You in my life

More love, more power

More of You in my life

And I will seek your face, with all of my heart

And I will seek your face, with all of my mind

And I will seek your face, with all of my strength

For You are my Lord

For You are my Lord

You are my Lord

### **Let us pray**

We thank you loving Father because you make yourself know to us and you are present in our lives even though we do not recognise or acknowledge you.

You do not leave us orphaned but embrace us with parental love that encourages and comforts us.

You ensure that we are not alone by filling us with your Spirit of truth that inspires and empowers us.

We receive more love, more power than we deserve.

Thank you Father for your presence, your love and your encouragement.

And now our prayers for others.

Imagine that our prayers are like circles in a pond made by throwing a stone into the water. The smooth surface of the pond is broken as the stone drops and we see the first circle emerge.

In this circle are our families, our friends, our church family, people dear to us whose well being we especially have at heart. Some may be facing challenging times at the moment whether due to health issues, or staying isolated or facing decisions about the way back to the work that they are doing or the work that they have been continuing to do over the past few weeks.

The circle spreads as we think of people in our neighbourhood, our town. We thank God for the increased sense of neighbourliness which has emerged, for the kindly deeds done during

this time of the corona pandemic. We pray for those who have helped us and those we have been able to help. We think especially of shop assistants pharmacists, postal workers and refuse collectors. All those who have worked to keep vital services going.

As the circle spreads we pray for our land especially lifting to God our political leaders who continue to have to make vital decisions in the coming days. Give them wisdom and understanding and insight into the varying needs of the people of our land. And especially we pray for those working in NHS and in care homes. Be with those on the front line, doctors and nurses caring for the sick and dying and also ambulance crews, paramedics and other auxiliary services.

And now the circle spreads right out to the furthest edge of the pond. And we turn in our prayers to the corners of your world. Loving Lord, the news seems so often to be filled by what is happening in our land, we get small glimpses of how this pandemic is affecting other countries. But we know that they are suffering too; and so often without the network of care and support that we receive here in our land. We feel helpless as to what to do but now in our prayers we can surround them with our love that is empowered by the Holy Spirit .

Our prayers may feel like a small drop in the pond of your world yet we are confident that they are heard and received by you.

And so now we join together in the prayers that Jesus himself taught us. Please say this out loud in whatever words are comfortable for you.

[Song Spirit of God \[Paul Arnold\]](#)

### **Spirit of God**

*Paul Arnold*

Spirit of God, descend we pray

And lead each one in your true way.

Help us to hear your still small voice

Which chides and checks us when we stray.

Spirit of peace and gentleness

That holds and heals those in distress,

Complete in us that sacred task

And mend with love our brokenness.

Spirit of joy, heaven's graceful dove,

That soars through space on wings of love,

Alight on us, and break the bonds  
Of doubt, and every fear remove.

Spirit of hope and holiness  
And self-control and faithfulness,  
Bring us to bear these holy fruits  
That hands may do what hearts confess.

Spirit of power and purity  
Whose loving works we long to see,  
Dispel the fear that holds our hearts  
And nails our Saviour to the tree.

Spirit of truth and constancy,  
Who was and is, and is to be,  
Stir up anew within our hearts  
Your fire, eternal one in three.

### **Final prayer**

May God's blessing be with us,  
A blessing from the one who calls us together  
A blessing from the one who calls us to care  
A blessing from the one who never deserts us  
A blessing for all times and all places  
A blessing from our gracious God. Amen