



17th May, 2020



aster 6

Welcome: Whether this is your 'home-place' for worship, or if you are new or a This is God's place. You are welcome here.

Wherever you are make a space for God.

You might like to light a candle. Be comfortable and warm wherever you are sitting.

I have included YouTube links for the hymns. If you want to listen to the hymns or sing along with music, click on the link, or copy and paste it in your internet page.

Coming Together To Worship

Welcome: To each Other. (Announcements)

Zoom meeting at 10am

Congregational meeting at 11am

A Call To Worship

Come, let us worship God.

What kind of God do we worship?

Our God is not far distant, but is very near

Amen

Our God is the Lover of us all.

Amen

Our God longs for us.

Amen

This is the kind of God whom we worship.

Come, let us worship God.

A Prayer Of Approach

Gracious and loving God,

We know that You always keep Your promises.

Through Jesus, You promised the gift of Your Holy Spirit,

To be sent to all

Who put their trust in You.

We come now to claim that promise.

We know that by Your Spirit

You are with us all the time.

Help us to make this Your time,

For You to speak to us

In whatever way that You choose.
Make us ready to hear You
Through songs, prayers, stories, and music.
Make us ready to feel Your presence in silence,
And in the smiles of those around us.
Guide and direct us in all that we do,
And show Yourself to us in unexpected
As well as in familiar ways.
This we ask in the name of Jesus.
Amen

Hymn 143 Immortal, Invisible

<https://youtu.be/spE-BE23qxA?list=TLPQMTEwNTlwMjCvXarOObPmmg>

Immortal Invisible God Only Wise (St. Denio)

1. Immortal invisible God only wise
In light inaccessible
Hid from our eyes
Most blessed most glorious
The Ancient of Days
Almighty victorious
Thy great name we praise
2. Unresting unhasting
And silent as light
Nor wanting nor wasting
Thou rulest in might
Thy justice like mountains
High soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains
Of goodness and love
3. To all life thou givest
To both great and small
In all life thou livest
The true life of all
We blossom and flourish
As leaves on the tree
And wither and perish
But naught changeth thee

4. Great Father of glory
Pure Father of light
Thine angels adore thee
All veiling their sight
All praise we would render
O help us to see
'Tis only the splendour
Of light hideth thee

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Walter Chalmers Smith
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Prayer of Praise and Confession

A prayer of praise

This prayer is to be punctuated by Selahs. These are mentioned in the Psalms, but no one knows exactly what they are. It seems clear that they are some kind of pause in the narrative, but for what? In today's prayer, they are designed to be opportunities to make sound of praise. So instruments may be used, or people may clap or rattle their keys, or simply cheer.

Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing His praises.

Selah

Our God made the world and everything in it.
He's the Lord of heaven and earth.
He doesn't need churches or houses to live in.
He doesn't need anything.
He's the one who supplies our needs.

Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing His praises.

Selah

He gives life and breath to everything.
All life began through Him
And we are His children.
Even though we sometimes go through difficult times,
He never forgets about us.

He hears us when we cry for help.
Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing His praises.

Selah

He wants people to seek for Him
And to find Him,
Discovering, when we do,
That God is close to each one of us,
And has been seeking for us all along.

Let the whole world bless our God

and loudly sing His praises.

Selah

Amen

Call to Reconciliation

What is our hope? Simply put, it is that God does not give up on us. With such good news, we can dare to bring our prayers to the One who will not cast aside our words or our hearts.

Unison Prayer for Forgiveness

We admit, Knowing God, that from plastic cards to websites, from handheld devices to stock options, we are surrounded by a variety of gods who demand our worship. We can all too easily believe that work is our life that wealth is the reason for our being, and that success is the very air we breathe.

Forgive us, God of mercy. You are not found in a computer chip, but in the child who holds our hand.

You are not a simple tweet, but the Word that can transform our very lives. You are not a disembodied, constantly recalculating voice, but the One who calls us to life, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

L: Despite everything we do, God loves us. This grace is why we can dare to hope.

P: **We will witness to this hope in every word we speak to every person we meet. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven. Amen.**

We Listen For The "Word" Of God



The Story from the Early Christian writings: Acts 17:22–31

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

²⁹ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

L: Open our eyes, O god to the beauty of your word.

ALL: May our lips and our lives unite to serve you.

Reading from the “Good News” of Jesus: John 14:15–21



¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my

commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

L: Your word, O God, is a lamp to our feet

ALL: A light to our path

Hymn 412 God sends us his spirit

<https://youtu.be/3-cwL6z0BjA>

Chorus

Spirit of our Father

Spirit Friend

Spirit of our Jesu

Spirit Friend

Spirit of God's people

Spirit Friend

1. God sends us the Spirit
To befriend and help us
Recreate and guide us
Spirit Friend
Spirit who enlivens
Sanctifies enlightens
Sets us free
Is now our Spirit friend
2. Darkened roads are clearer
Heavy burdens lighter
When we're walking with our
Spirit Friend
Now we need not fear
The power of the darkness
None can overcome
Our Spirit Friend
3. Now we are God's people
Agents of Your purpose
Bonded by Your presence
Spirit Friend
Lead us forward ever
Slipping backward never
To Your remade world
Our Spirit Friend

Address: Rev Paul Cameron

John 14:8-27

What led you here? Did some wind just blow you in off the street and bring you? The word for Spirit means breath or wind. We are all like kites blown by the breath of God, the wind of God's spirit. There are times when the wind of God's Spirit just seems to blow us to where we are and we open our eyes and we have some unexpected experience of the sacred, of the holy, and God, being God, is generous and humble enough to yield to our pride, allowing us to enjoy the luxury of thinking that we did it all on our own, that it's our faith, our belief, our trust. It's something that we have accomplished, something that we have done, something that we have found.

When I played chess with my grandson, Owen, he couldn't beat me. He just couldn't. A few moves and "Checkmate! Gottcha!" I had played for years. The learning curve for chess is pretty steep and most people get discouraged and give it up for draughts. Well, I could tell that Owen was about to give it up - just like I was going to give it up when I first learned it from my brother - and so I decided to let him win a few times - to keep his interest alive.

Of course I played that little game where I would say, with great sincerity, things like, "Gosh, I should have seen that move coming!" and "Boy, you sure fooled me there, Jason." and "That was a great move. You caught me by surprise!" and "You know son, you're picking up this game faster than I did when my brother taught it to me." But, it's an illusion. Just like the illusion I had when my brother let me beat him.

I am convinced that we don't so much believe because of anything we do, but because we open ourselves to God's shaping and leading.

It's really God's doing. God meets us where we are and then shapes us and moulds us like clay and we don't even know that it's happening. Of course, we fight against that notion just as we may fight against God's working in and through us. And I allow for the fact that we do have a hand in it all. We have our own part as co-creators with God. But, the longer I live the more I am aware of how this is God's world and you and I are a part of God's own working out of God's will for our lives.

So, if it's mostly God's doing, what is our role? I believe that one of the greatest roles that we can have in helping others along in their spiritual journey is to give them a proper introduction to God. A friend persuaded me that if you don't love God, it is only because you have not been

properly introduced. I am convinced that what happened some 2,000 years was that, people were being properly introduced to God and with the proper introduction amazing things are likely to happen. Lives will be changed.

The language Jesus speaks of is in the language of love and that love language was fluently spoken by those whose lives had been shaped and formed by Jesus. At Pentecost, the miracle wasn't that people were speaking or hearing languages that they had never learned. The miracle is that everyone was hearing God's language. Everyone was hearing the language of love and being introduced to God – who is love – with that language.

That 'Spirit' miracle happens today despite how poorly we introduce people to God. No one ever loves anyone because they should love them – not even in our love for God. But, isn't that how people in society see a relationship with God in the church? We prod people with should and ought and the guilt of religious authorities, parents and even church school teachers. But the enthusiasm we may have for changing other people for the better frequently leads in the opposite direction.



We don't need a "should" to love God. We only need a proper introduction.

To know God is to love God because once we really get to know God, we find that God's love is irresistible. It is God's irresistibility that draws us into love. Once we know even a little bit about God, we fall forever and hopelessly in love. If we don't love God, if we fear or mistrust God, if we don't place our faith, our trust, in God, it isn't because of God. It's because something happened in the introduction that has misled us or misrepresented God.

Introductions to God are filtered and shaped by the one doing the introducing. Some of my favourite introductions to a God that we cannot help but love are contained in the stories of Jesus. There is what we call the parable of the Prodigal Son. The son makes a mess of his life. He deeply hurts his father, takes his inheritance, and throws it away and then does what every normal son would do under the circumstances – he goes home for help. When the father sees him coming home from a distance, he runs down the road to meet him and he embraces him, forgives him and throws a party for him.

God is like that father. That is the whole point. There is nothing redemptive or wonderful about a son who screws up and then runs home to ask for help. The astounding part is the father. The father is the miracle because he is generous beyond reason, forgiving without conditions and welcoming without resentment or condemnation. He is the embodiment of unconditional love and he has focused that love on the one who needs it most – the wayward son.

If we stop for a moment and allow that truth to penetrate our defences, we will have received the beginning of a proper introduction to God. To quote one of the Sufi poets, Hafiz: “This is the time for you to compute the impossibility that there is anything but Grace.”

Hafiz had a proper introduction to God, and it is evidenced throughout his poetry. He knew what Jesus was saying in this parable: God is full of Grace and nothing can be more important for our lives than that. Hafiz seems to speak directly to us as we hear about the loving father when he states in another poem: “O, surely there is something wrong with your ideas of God if you think our Beloved would not be so tender.”

Both Jesus and Hafiz are attempting to introduce us to a God that we cannot help but love. This God bursts at the seams with love and forgiveness and acceptance and tenderness and what do we need more than that? What could we possibly want more than that? What could possibly have more effect on our minds and hearts than this information – the creator of all that is; who is part of every cell of existence has the nature of an amazingly loving and tender father or mother.

What could this introduction mean for you and me? Well, it may mean that we could relax and let go of all concerns. It may mean that we could let go of our fears and especially of our self-condemning thoughts. If God is not against us, then we need not be against ourselves. If God loves us tenderly, then why not love ourselves in the same way? If God is willing to run down the road to meet, greet and welcome us home, then why should we want to stay away and live so lonely and isolated and unhappy?

There is a second introduction that we can help make in the lives of others. It is a proper introduction to yourself. If you do not love yourself, it is because you have not been properly introduced.

Many of us find self-love difficult. The problem is not that we are unlovable but that we have been not been properly introduced to who we really are. Like many people in our society you have probably been taught that you are imperfect, inadequate, unlovable, never able to measure up, never able to meet whatever seemingly impossible standards have been held up for you. You may feel helpless in the face of what seems an immense task – to accept yourself.

But, as the Sufi poet Rumi promises, “When you are helpless and unable to walk, a stretcher will come from Grace and take you where you need to go.” You reach that helpless point and the stretcher comes and you arrive at a place of proper introduction to yourself that can make all the difference.

In some sense this process is a spiritual mystery. It is the wind of the Spirit blowing unexpectedly in your life.

When Grace appears and opens your eyes then you realize that everything you were seeking outside yourself was really right there on your side of the door. Suddenly you begin to discover that all the information you ever needed about who you are and what you are worth is present and clear. The problem is not your lovability but a faulty introduction to who you thought you were. You are essentially lovable and worthwhile.

The key to a shift in your self-view may begin with a proper introduction to God who is love. The next step is to the second truth of your own lovability.

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." The amazing implications of this simple but self-image shattering statement made it impossible for me to continue to ignore my value. If God is essentially lovable (and God is) and God resides within the centre of my being (and God does) then I am also essentially lovable because of that Divine Presence. Anything else that I think or feel about myself must take second place to that reality. If I take God seriously (and I do) then I must also take myself seriously because I am the place where God has put the Divine Presence.

You are not inferior, unacceptable, and unlovable. You are worthy of God's attention, presence, and love. You may make wrong choices. You may be imperfect. You may be aware of the painful realities of a dark side to your life and of your ability to hurt yourself and others. But that is never enough to make this loving God leave the home God has made in your heart.

Rumi got it right when he wrote:

"Come, whoever you are!
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving,
Come.
This is not a caravan of despair.
It does not matter if you have broken
Your vow a thousand times. Still
Come, and yet again, Come!"

Let us open our heart and mind, to God's urgings, God's nudging and persuading. Let God's Spirit move you into new places in your life or clear away whatever old unhealthy habits and patterns keep you tied to the past.

The Spirit can liberate you from resentments against those whom you love. The Spirit can give you the strength to throw off false anxieties and to take upon yourself the confidence which belongs to life itself. The Spirit can awaken you to sudden insight into the way you must take your world, and it can open your eyes to a view of it that makes everything new. The Spirit can give you joy in the midst of ordinary routine as well as in the depth of sorrow.

The Spirit can create warmth in the coldness you feel within you and around you, and it can give you wisdom and strength where your human love towards a loved one has failed. The Spirit can give you the certainty that you are accepted when you feel totally rejected, and when you reject yourself totally. The Spirit can give you the power of prayer that nobody has except through the Spiritual Presence.

The Spirit can work in you with a soft but insistent voice telling you there are chances of a new life waiting before the door of your inner self to fill its void and to conquer its dullness when your life seems empty and meaningless. The Spirit can work in you, awakening the desire to strive towards the great against the profanity of the average day. The Spirit can give you the courage that says "yes" to life in spite of the destructiveness you have experienced around you and within you. The Spirit can reveal to you that you have hurt somebody deeply, but it also can give you the right word that reunites them with you. The Spirit can make you love, with divine love, someone you profoundly dislike or in whom you have no interest.

You have with you a presence, encouraging you, standing with you, strengthening you, who says to you, "I love you. You are accepted. You are my son; you are my daughter." Forrest Gump's mother was right, "Life is like a box of chocolates - you never know what you're gonna get." But, you don't have to be afraid of the unknown. It really doesn't matter because you are never alone.

Our Response To The "Word" ..

Hymn 398 Come down O Love divine

<https://youtu.be/flvKDgktutl>

1. Come down O Love divine
Seek out this soul of mine
And visit it with your own ardour glowing
O Comforter draw near
Within my heart appear
And kindle it your holy flame bestowing
2. There let it freely burn
Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming
And let your glorious light
Shine ever on my sight
And make my pathway clear by your illuming
3. Let holy charity
My outward vesture be
And lowliness become my inner clothing

True lowliness of heart
Which takes the humbler part
And for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing

4. And so the yearning strong
With which the soul will long
Shall far surpass the power of human telling
For none can guess its grace
Till we become the place
In which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling

CCLI Song # 3260959

Bianco da Siena | Richard Frederick Littledale

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Offering - money, selves, and our prayers.

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise God, all creatures here below,
praise God above, you heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

Prayers of Intercession

Prayers for Other People

(Mark Hillis)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

We also hear the words of the John who wrote the letters in the back of our Bibles: *"Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or a sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."* (1 John 4:20-21)

Loving God, these are tough words. We want to enact them: with and for all the "brothers and sisters" you give us to serve.

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1 John 4:17)

Good question. How shall we answer?

"Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." (1 John 3:18)

So, there's no getting around this, is there? Gracious God, generate within each of us a loving, forgiving, patient and willing spirit!

Renewing and reforming God, only you can remove the stains of self-serving and corruption that have so sullied your Church in the world and hindered your message.

Only your Spirit can enliven us to become agents of healing and reconciliation in our part of the world. May we sense the breath of Jesus restoring our faith and confidence, and whispering fresh hope to those who are discouraged.

Loving God, place each of us in community with those who will expect the best of us and from us. Help us to be a faithful church, unafraid to face the world with your life-giving generosity.

Gracious God, your Spirit is free and not confined by our imaginations. We can see you at work in so many people who serve others:

- The dedicated professionals risking their own health in clinics, surgeries, hospitals, ambulances, and nursing homes;
- The residential care and disability support workers who advocate for those in their charge;
- The teachers who encourage the gifts and skills of the young and old;
- Those who care for wildlife; those who save seeds and nurture living plants;
- Those who pick up and clean the rubbish created by the rest of us;
- The community leaders who speak truth to power;
- Countless volunteers who give time and energy in untold ways;
- We take a few moments to pray earnestly for those people who are particularly well known to us

Loving God, in response to your amazing “commandment,” we commit ourselves to action. May fear be banished. May thanksgiving and joy be restored in and through the compassion that you nurture in us and others.

In the name of Jesus, AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

**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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn 613 Lord of All Hopefulness (Slane)

https://youtu.be/9-D_aT8CXyc

1. Lord of all hopefulness
Lord of all joy
Whose trust ever child-like
No cares could destroy
Be there at our waking
And give us we pray
Your bliss in our hearts Lord
At the break of the day

2. Lord of all eagerness
Lord of all faith
Whose strong hands were skilled
At the plane and the lathe
Be there at our labours
And give us we pray
Your strength in our hearts Lord
At the noon of the day

3. Lord of all kindliness
Lord of all grace
Your hands swift to welcome
Your arms to embrace
Be there at our homing
And give us we pray
Your love in our hearts Lord
At the eve of the day

4. Lord of all gentleness
Lord of all calm
Whose voice is contentment
Whose presence is balm
Be there at our sleeping
And give us we pray
Your peace in our hearts Lord
At the end of the day

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Benediction:

Sending

L: Our God, who is gracious, sends us out to be a blessing.

**P: With our hearts, we will sing God's praises;
with our hands, we will serve God's people.**

L: Jesus, who is our Brother, sends us to be with others.

**P: We will comfort all whose hearts are troubled;
we will go to help all who cry out to us.**

L: The Holy Spirit, who is our Advocate, sends us into a broken world.

**P: We will work for justice for all who are oppressed;
we will teach songs of hope to all who despair.**

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