

Sunday 29th March 2020

Call to Worship

Come by your Holy Spirit and help me to worship you in spirit and in truth.
Amen

Read or sing these verses - Hymn: StF 370

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)

Let us pray together

Holy and Loving God, all life comes from you, and in you all things hold together.
As we remember this, we pause to give you thanks and Praise.
As we remember this, we are reminded that you hold the end from the beginning,
and that nothing is too large or too small for you.
As we remember this, remind us that as all things are held, so we are held by you, in
love.
Help us in our anxious thoughts.
Help us in our day to day lives.
Help us in this time of deep uncertainty.
We acknowledge that at times we are selfish, at times we do not seek you first.
But we know that you are always faithful, merciful, gracious, and forgiving.
(Silence)
We receive your mercy and forgiveness faithfulness and grace.
In the name of Christ.
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 for ever.
Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 37: 1-10:

Address:

The Hebrew *ruach* means “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” The word’s first use in the Bible appears in the second verse: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). In Genesis 6:17 *ruach* is translated “breath of life.”

God’s *Ruach* is the source of life, it gives life to all creation. All living creatures owe the breath of life to the Creative Spirit of God, it is responsible for the universe, the earth, and the spirit of humankind.

Job understood this: “As long as I have life within me, the breath [*ruach*] of God in my nostrils” (Job 27:3). Later, Elihu tells Job, “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4).

God’s spirit is the key. With God’s spirit, anything is possible. Without it, existence is just flesh and blood. But with God’s spirit, there is life--and what Jesus called fullness of life.

In ten verses of Ezekiel, the word *ruach* occurs eight times, and while it is variously translated as “breath” and “wind”, whether it appears in one instance as breath or in another as wind, it is all the same life-giving force. And it is all from God.

Thus, breathing becomes a metaphor for divine presence. Despite the exiles’ fear of being cut off from God, God is as near to them as their own breath. Ezekiel’s vision does nothing to alleviate them of their present difficult circumstances, though it does promise them a future in their own land.

Though they remain in exile, still coping with the loss of familiar ways to find and meet God, they are reassured of God’s presence. The standing multitude of dry bones brought back to life now has a different meaning. Now God is present, they can breathe. And stand ready for the future, looking forward in hope.

We may feel 'exiles', from our usual routine, from our church fellowship, from others. Yet God is present in heart and soul as Spirit speaks to Spirit. God is present as we seek in any way we can to help and to communicate with our sisters and brothers in Christ and our neighbours. God is present in his word and in our lives, as near to us as our very breath.

AMEN

Read or sing these verses - Hymn StF 372

Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcoming's weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (d. 1434)

A time of prayer

Loving God we pray for your world,
for the leaders who are making difficult decisions as every day brings new changes and challenges.

We pray for our nation, that decisions might be made with wisdom and care for the benefit of all.

We pray for our town. For all who live here that your peace might reign and that your perfect love might settle our fears.

We pray for frontline workers.

We pray for those who are ill and those with symptoms that their worries may be eased.

We pray for those who are financially affected by this present situation.

We pray for those who are struggling, and for those who suffer with mental health issues.

We pray for our loved ones, those we know who may be ill, those who are struggling, those who are confused and conflicted...

And finally, we pray for ourselves, you know what is on our hearts and minds, and so we offer that to you our own prayers and concerns.

Lord of all, Lord for all, hear our prayer

AMEN

Read or sing these verses - Hymn StF 76

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,

give me joy in my heart, I pray;

give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,

keep me praising till the break of day:

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King of kings!

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King!

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,

give me peace in my heart, I pray;

give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,

keep me loving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King of kings!

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King!

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,

give me love in my heart, I pray;

give me love in my heart, keep me serving,

keep me serving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King of kings!

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to the King!

A prayer of blessing

May you know the deep peace of the God who knows and perfectly loves you.

May you take the yoke of Jesus upon you, knowing that he bears your load with you.

May you know the indwelling Spirit bringing you wisdom and peace.

Amen