

## A service for 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2025 Trinity (StF)

### Call to Worship: Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, the children of man that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Amen.

*The author of our opening hymn, Reginald Heber, was appointed Bishop of Calcutta in 1823. His diocese was not only India and Shri Lanka, but the whole of the Far East, including Australia and New Zealand! He died at Trichinopoly in 1826, through overwork, aged only 43, but not before he'd written several beautiful hymns, including the one we're about to sing. Hymn number 11, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!'*

**1. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**

**Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;**

**Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!**

**God in Three persons, blessed Trinity.**

**2. Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,**

**Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;**

**Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,**

**Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.**

**3. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,**

**Although the sinful human eye thy glory may not see;**

**Only Thou art holy! there is none beside Thee,**

**Perfect in power, in love, and purity.**

**4. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**

**All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea;**

**Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!**

**God in Three persons, blessed Trinity.**

© R. Heber (1783 – 1826)

**Let us pray.**

Holy, holy, Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, your Word created our universe and all life throughout it. You sought to reconcile yourself to sinful human beings through the Law and prophets, so we become your holy people, a royal priesthood, but when we rebelled against you and made ourselves your enemies, you displayed your boundless love and goodness in your Son, Jesus Christ, whose life death and resurrection broke the power of sin and death over us. When he ascended to heaven, you sent the Holy Spirit to inspire, comfort and guide us through our life, as your power living within us. May we pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness, for you alone are worthy of our praise and thanksgiving.

Heavenly Father accept our heartfelt thanks for all that you do for us and for every

blessing we receive from you. Thank you for this wonderful planet upon which we live, the beauty of land sea and sky, for people who care for us, guide and inspire us, for opportunities and experiences that fulfil our lives, but most of all for your boundless grace upon which we depend. Help us to worship you in spirit, love and truth in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

***In our prayer of confession, when I say, 'Lord, in your mercy', please respond with, 'Hear our prayer'.***

Almighty God, you are holy and righteous, whereas we are deeply flawed and sinful. Even when we try our best to live as you call us to, we fall short of what we ought to be. Forgive us when we are selfish or self-righteous, unforgiving and judgmental. Pardon us when we have been unwilling to trust in your saving grace.

***'Lord, in your mercy'..... 'Hear our prayer'.***

Help us to change our ways as we acknowledge our sinfulness. Renew and restore us, so our lives reflect the victory Jesus has won over sin and death. May the Holy Spirit re-kindle the embers of our faith, so we play our part in building your kingdom here.

***'Lord, in your mercy'..... 'Hear our prayer'.***

Loving God, we believe that you have heard our prayer and have not only pardoned us, but invite us to walk with you once more. Hereafter, may the Holy Spirit enable us to serve you and our neighbours gladly and faithfully, so our lives honour you in Jesus' beautiful name. Amen.

***As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:***

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.***

***Our second hymn was written by Revd. Michaela Youngson, who is currently serving as a Chair in the London District of the Methodist Church. Michaela was born in Cornwall, but raised in Yorkshire, was President of the Methodist Conference for 2018-19 and is Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference and Connexional Ecumenical Officer for the Methodist Church. There is a local connection as she trained at Queen's College, Birmingham. We sing hymn number 399, 'When deep despair casts out all light'.***

***1. When deep despair casts out all light***

***And hope is wearing thin;  
Come Spirit, dance with gentle grace,  
Shine through the dullness we embrace  
And make the colours sing;  
And make the colours sing.***

***2. When greed dictates that children die***

***And poverty holds sway;  
Come Spirit, burn as living flame,  
Prompt us to act to end this shame;  
Cast apathy away;  
Cast apathy away.***

***3. When colour, lifestyle, creed or name***

**Cause groundless hate and fear;  
Come Spirit, weave a web of peace,  
That prejudice and violence cease;  
Reveal God's purpose here;  
Reveal God's purpose here.**

**4. When guilt and fear tear us apart  
And faith's a bitter thing;  
Come Spirit, dance with gentle grace,  
Shine through the dullness we embrace  
And make the colours sing;  
And make the colours sing.**

© *Michaela Youngson*

***We come now to our prayers of intercession for people nearby and far away. Let us pray.***

Loving God, although we live on a wonderful and self-sustaining planet, because of improved communications, we hear about so much pain and suffering, here and abroad, that we are driven to despair, especially as so many of the issues result from humankind's failure to care for our neighbours. Whilst we offer ourselves to play what part we can in repairing some of the brokenness around us, we know that our powers are limited. Nevertheless, we believe that all things are possible for you, so we pray that you will inspire and warm the hearts of people with greater power and influence, so they will bring about changes rectify the results of mankind's cruelty, folly, exploitation and indifference.

As we celebrate the birth of the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray for our church, all the churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church. May the living Spirit rekindle our desire to share good news with our neighbours, both local and further afield, not only in words but through acts of grace. Teach us to speak of the grace and glory of Christ Jesus with one voice and serve him in unity of mission, so we bring others to know and serve our Lord Jesus.

Heavenly Father, we grieve that wars are currently being waged in Ukraine, the Holy Land, Myanmar, Congo, Somalia and Sudan with all the suffering, destruction, death and displacement that results from mankind's inability to co-exist with neighbours. We see pictures of the suffering of civilians, all too-often children as they face heavy bombardment and deprivation of the essentials for life, which are all the more appalling as we commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World, yet seem to have failed to learn the means of co-existing in peace. May the living Spirit help the leaders of all nations to recognize that 'jaw-jaw is better than war-war'. May the Holy Spirit bring about just and lasting settlements to the conflicts we have named and for your shalom to be bestowed on all nations.

Jesus is the source of healing and well-being, so we pray for people who are ill in body, mind or spirit, for those brought low by loneliness, fear or need and everybody who is experiencing the agony of bereavement. Wherever possible, Lord, empower us to offer support and friendship to them. In a time of silence, we remember friends and neighbours for whom we are especially concerned .....  
Loving Lord, embrace them with the warmth and power of your love, so they may be healed, encouraged, granted reassurance and enduring peace.

Abba, Heavenly Father, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe in your care. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen us in our discipleship, guiding us by the example of Jesus Christ and sharing the love you give in such abundance with all-comers, trusting in your grace and goodness evermore. Amen.

## **Our Epistle is Paul's Letter to the Romans chapter 5 verses 1 to 5**

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Amen.

**Address 1:** *'God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us'. Rom. 5:5*

Before my address, I am going to refer to the Holy Spirit as a feminine being. Let me explain: although the Spirit is traditionally referred to as male, the word '**Spirit**' in Hebrew is '**Ruach**' and it is a feminine noun, in which case ought we to use '**she**'? In Greek '**Spirit**' is '**Pneuma**', but it is gender neutral and I think it is questionable to refer to the Spirit as '**It**'. Moreover, in Proverbs Wisdom is portrayed as a woman which suggests that King Solomon would agree with me. I invite you to think about my argument, but please don't let it distract you from the main message.

Our reading from Romans shows Paul at his best. He declares that we have been justified, or reconciled to God through faith, not by good works, or by following the Law given to Moses. This peace has been accomplished by Christ Jesus, whose death and resurrection has broken the power of sin and death over us. Just think for a moment; God, himself in Jesus, died for the sins of the whole world as the one perfect sacrifice for sin, such is his boundless love for sinners like us. Don't forget 'grace' means undeserved, unearned love. John Newton was absolutely correct when he wrote the hymn, 'Amazing grace'. We no longer have to try to earn the Lord's favour and forgiveness, for we can do nothing to make him love us more than he already does: when we serve the Lord, we do it freely as a response to his loving-kindness.

Since our sins are forgiven, there is no impediment to keep us from sharing in God's glory, as his earthly children, a royal priesthood, and so we have solid hope that we shall indeed share in his glory. Paul wrote that this hope enables us to rejoice, or persevere amidst our sufferings – don't forget his Christian audience in Rome was being persecuted by Emperor Nero, so their suffering was grave indeed. Whatever our sufferings, persevering in our faith strengthens our character and gives us solid grounds for facing the future with renewed hope.

Our hope will not be baseless, Paul declared, for it is founded in God's love experienced in the Holy Spirit, whom God has breathed into us. This is at the core of the Lord's Salvation for humankind: faith, hope and love, but as Paul wrote to the Corinthian Churches, 'The greatest of these is love'. God is God, the Creator of all, holy and righteous. Jesus is God in man, fully divine and human, revealing God's love through his life, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the power of God breathed into us and living within us. She strengthens, inspires, comforts and drives us, just as she drove the hapless hundred and twenty failures out from that locked room at Pentecost, turning them into a movement that terrified the superpower of the age: the Roman Empire. The Spirit teaches, guides and sanctifies us when we invite her into our lives, an equal and essential part of the Holy Trinity. Amen.

***We continue our worship as we sing hymn number 398, written by Revd. Brian Wren at Pentecost, 1969, when he was a Congregational Minister at Hockley, Essex. It reminds us that the Spirit is alive and well today. We shall sing, 'There's a spirit in the air,'***

1. There's a spirit in the air,  
Telling Christians everywhere:  
Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
Living, working, in our world.
2. Lose your shyness, find your tongue;  
Tell the world what God has done:  
God in Christ has come to stay;  
Live tomorrow's life today!
3. When believers break the bread,  
When a hungry child is fed,  
Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
Living, working, in our world.
4. Still his Spirit leads the fight,  
Seeing wrong and setting right:  
God in Christ has come to stay;  
Live tomorrow's life today!
5. When a stranger's not alone,  
Where the homeless find a home,  
Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
Living, working, in our world.
6. May his Spirit fill our praise,  
Guide our thoughts and change our ways:  
God in Christ has come to stay;  
Live tomorrow's life today!
7. There's a Spirit in the air,  
Calling people everywhere:  
Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
Living, working, in our world.

© Brian A. Wren {born 1936}

**The Gospel reading is John chapter 16 verses 1 to 15**

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." Amen.

*Our penultimate hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1746 and was originally intended for Whit Sunday. It has a grace and power that makes it as relevant today as it was 221 years ago. Hymn number 378, 'Father of everlasting grace'.*

1. Father of everlasting grace,  
Your goodness and your truth we praise,  
Your goodness and your truth we prove;  
You have, in honour of your Son,  
The gift unspeakable sent down,  
The Spirit of life and power and love.
2. Send us the Spirit of your Son,  
To make the depths of Godhead known,  
To make us share the life divine;

Send him the sprinkled blood to apply,  
Send him our souls to sanctify,  
To show and seal us ever thine.

3. So shall we pray and never cease,  
So shall we thankfully confess  
Your wisdom, truth, and power, and love,  
With joy unspeakable adore,  
And bless and praise you evermore,  
And serve you as your hosts above:

4. Till, added to that heavenly choir,  
We raise our songs of triumph higher,  
And praise you with a bolder voice,  
Out-soar the first-born seraph's flight,  
And sing, with all our friends in light,  
With everlasting love rejoice.

© C. Wesley (1707 – 1788)

**Address 2:** *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13*

At the Last Supper, Jesus reassured his disciples that they would not be left alone when he ascended to heaven, for they were painfully aware how weak and hopeless they were; utterly unfit to bear good news to a sceptical, hostile world. Jesus said that when he ascended, the Spirit of truth would come to them and guide them. The Greek word for Spirit of truth is **‘Paracletos’ which is translated as ‘Helper’** in the Good News Bible and as **Counsellor** in the New International Version, while other translations give **Comforter, Advocate** and **Intercessor** as alternatives.

In fact, Paracletos is all of the above, so let me cut to the heart of what Jesus was saying: the Holy Spirit is a hot-line between God the Father and God the Son. She speaks God's truth into our minds; she empowers us to do God's will in words and actions; she builds up our faith and fills us with hope for the future amid the trials of life. The Spirit reveals Jesus to him, though he is no longer with us in bodily form and she encourages us to serve as Christ calls us to – as a loving response to God's grace. She opens the scriptures to us in new and unexpected ways, so they are as relevant now as when they were first written. Above all, she enables us to love both God and our neighbours, including the grumblers, the obstinate, aggressive and ungrateful, for love is her gift to us all. Here is an example of how the Holy Spirit changes lives.

Leonard Cheshire succeeded Wing Commander Guy Gibson as Commanding officer of 617 Squadron, the legendary ‘Dam-Busters’. Whilst with 617 Squadron he developed a new means of pinpointing enemy targets by extremely risky low-level marking in the face of heavy enemy anti-aircraft fire. As a result of his efforts he was awarded the VC in July 1944, having survived 100 combat missions. Leonard Cheshire's 101<sup>st</sup> mission changed his life, for he was the RAF's official observer when the second atomic bomb was dropped on Japan in August 1945. He was in a Superfortress, that followed the one which dropped the nuclear bomb on Nagasaki. The experience, combined with his sincere Christian faith, led him to reconsider his attitude to war and also triggered the onset of tuberculosis. During his convalescence, Leonard dedicated himself to work for peace, as a result of which he became an unlikely member of CND.

In the late 1940s, he nursed a dying friend and felt a call to meet the needs of disabled people. In 1948 he founded an organisation known as the Cheshire Homes and in 1959 he married Sue Ryder who had founded the Sue Ryder Foundation for the

Sick and Disabled. Both organisations provide support at home and run residential homes for disabled people throughout the world. They are regarded as the UK's leading voluntary sector provider of support services for the disabled.

In an age where anything military is often treated with scorn by both Media and politicians, the story of Leonard Cheshire is an inspiration, for it shows that there is nothing incompatible in a war hero becoming a peace-campaigner and the founder of a major charity. The Spirit achieved his transformation and she is ready and willing to strangely warm our hearts and transform us – if we open our hearts to her. Amen.

***Our closing hymn is a clarion call to speak up for the gospel by Canon Edward Burns. It was written in 1968 for an evangelising challenge in the diocese of Blackburn. May we, too, share good news for all in our words and actions. We shall sing hymn number 418, 'We have a gospel to proclaim,'***

**1. We have a gospel to proclaim,  
Good news for all throughout the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name:  
We sing his story, tell his worth.**

**2. Tell of his birth at Bethlehem –  
Not in a royal house or hall,  
But in a stable, dark and dim,  
The Word made flesh, a light for all.**

**3. Tell of his death at Calvary:  
Hated by those he came to save,  
In lonely suffering on the cross,  
For all he loved his life he gave.**

**4. Tell of that glorious Easter morn;  
Empty the tomb, for he was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share his victory.**

**5. Tell of his reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified.  
He sends his Spirit on his church  
To live for him, the Lamb who died.**

**6. Now we rejoice to name him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel message we proclaim:  
We sing his glory, tell his worth.**

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***Benediction***

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**