

**DSW Written Service for Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May  
2023 - Easter 6 by Revd Jane Wilson**

**Opening Prayer**

Loving living God, here we are  
We've come to rest in your presence, to  
worship you.  
Joining with people across our nation, around  
the world, and with all the company of heaven,  
we come to offer you our worship and our  
praise, because you are worthy and that is  
what we're made for.  
We come because we love you and we know  
that we can trust in your love, creator God:  
your love for your world;  
your love for each one of us;  
your love that invites us to love others, to love  
ourselves, and to love you.  
So, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
receive our love, our adoration and our  
worship, which we humbly offer in the name of  
Jesus. Amen.

**Hymn [STF 348]**

He is Lord, he is Lord;  
He is risen from the dead, and he is Lord;  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
That Jesus Christ is Lord.

He is King, he is King;  
He will draw all nations to him, he is King;  
And the time shall be when the world shall sing  
That Jesus Christ is King.

He is love, he is love,  
He has shown us by his life that he is love;  
All his people sing with one voice of joy  
That Jesus Christ is love.

He is life, he is life;  
He has died to set us free and he is life;  
And he calls us all to live evermore,  
For Jesus Christ is life. *Anonymous*

**Reading: John 14:15-21 (CEV)**

<sup>15</sup> Jesus said to his disciples:  
If you love me, you will do as I  
command. <sup>16</sup> Then I will ask the Father to send  
you the Holy Spirit who will help<sup>[a]</sup> you and  
always be with you. <sup>17</sup> The Spirit will show you  
what is true. The people of this world cannot  
accept the Spirit, because they don't see or  
know him. But you know the Spirit, who is with  
you and will keep on living in you.

<sup>18</sup> I won't leave you like orphans. I will come  
back to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the people of  
this world won't be able to see me, but you  
will see me. And because I live, you will  
live. <sup>20</sup> Then you will know that I am one with  
the Father. You will know that you are one with  
me, and I am one with you. <sup>21</sup> If you love me,  
you will do what I have said, and my Father  
will love you. I will also love you and show you  
what I am like.

**Reflection – The Holy Spirit – our “Helper”**

In this reading from John's gospel, which  
follows the passage from last week, Jesus is  
having supper with his disciples and he's told  
them he's going to leave them soon.  
Understandably the disciples are quite anxious  
and bewildered, but Jesus speaks words of  
comfort and encouragement, telling them that  
he will ask the Father, who will give them  
another Helper who will stay with them  
forever.

Jesus is talking here about the Holy Spirit, who  
will work differently, in the sense that until now  
Jesus has been physically present with his  
disciples, so they've seen him at work, teaching  
and healing. But the Holy Spirit, on the other  
hand, will be with Jesus' followers all the time,  
wherever they may be. Jesus promises the  
Holy Spirit to all who love him and keep his  
commandments, so that they will not be left  
alone.

The Greek word used here for “Helper” is  
quite hard to translate – some versions use  
“Comforter”, “Advocate” or “Counsellor”, but  
according to scholars the meaning behind the  
original Greek is of “*someone who is called in  
to help in time of need.*”

I love that idea of Jesus sending us his Spirit as  
“someone who's called in to help in time of  
need.” When we need him, when we're faced  
with situations we don't feel able to cope with,  
where we don't know what to do, Jesus  
promises his help – the “helper” – the Holy  
Spirit. The Holy Spirit who will help us to do  
things we can't do on our own, who will guide  
us and comfort us and inspire us and give us his  
gifts of peace and courage and power and  
truth, so that we can step out in faith knowing  
that God through his Spirit is with us, he hasn't  
abandoned us.

Through the Holy Spirit, God will fill us with his gifts of wisdom and love and joy and peace and patience and all the other fruits of the Spirit that we and our world need so much. We need those things always, but perhaps in these times of crisis and conflict and climate change we need God's Holy Spirit more than ever don't we?

Jesus promised to send us his helper, but sometimes we forget that don't we? Sometimes we try to do everything in our own strength, sometimes we can even block the work of the Holy Spirit because we're so determined to do things "our way". And let's be honest, we haven't made such a good job of doing things our way, in the church, or in our world, have we?!

Sometimes we can block the work of the Spirit by our insistence on working to our agenda, instead of God's, or refusing to change what we do and how we do it, even if God wants us to!

Sometimes we fall into the trap of assuming that we have to come up with all the solutions to the problems we face – and all the while God is waiting, waiting for us to turn to him and ask for his help because he longs to work with us, to show us what he can do in situations that look impossible to us.

Sometimes we don't recognise the truth that God's Holy Spirit is here with us now, just like Jesus promised, and we miss the signs that he is alive and active and very present in our time. Many people are seeing signs that God through his Holy Spirit is stirring people's hearts and minds and opening them up to his love.

During the pandemic, research reported in the national press showed an upsurge in people turning to prayer, attending online services and prayer meetings, buying bibles and attending online Alpha courses. The online British bookstore Eden reported a 55% increase in sales of bibles, a Tearfund survey indicated that while around 5-7% of the nation go to a Sunday service at least once a month, that figure jumped dramatically to 24% of the British population attending online church services. And many of them were in the 18-34 age group and wouldn't normally go to church in a month of Sundays.

The recent Talking Jesus report in 2022 concluded that many non Christians are open to a conversation about Jesus (see <https://talkingjesus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Talking-Jesus-Report.pdf>) and while these are only small sparks of new life, they are signs that God's Holy Spirit is at work, and an answer to the prayers of those who have been praying for a revival in our nation for a long time.

Jesus told the Pharisees off for not being able to see the signs of the times, and maybe these are signs that we need to see, signs of a renewed spiritual hunger, a kind of spiritual reassessment and realignment which is happening even in the middle of these difficult times, when perhaps we'd least expect it. They might just be tiny sparks of light, but sparks can set off a wildfire! And perhaps what our world and our communities need is to be engulfed in the fire of the Holy Spirit, in the love of God which can transform even the darkest tragedy into a wondrous day of resurrection and new life in Jesus.

Something is stirring in our nation and I believe it's the power of the Holy Spirit working gently and lovingly to soften hearts and open them up to the love of God which changes everything. It's exciting and it's something to celebrate and praise God for. I believe God is changing things. We don't know how the world is going to look in the future, or how church will be, but whatever happens the most important thing is that we work with God's Holy Spirit, the Helper promised by Jesus, that we fan the sparks instead of missing them or stamping them out. And we can start by intentionally inviting the Holy Spirit of God to come into our hearts and our lives and our church afresh.

### **Prayer**

*You may wish to use these or other words to make your own prayers and voice the desires of your heart...*

Lord Jesus, I want to know your presence with me, here and now.

I want to work with you and walk with you. Come, Lord, through your Holy Spirit; fill my heart, mind and soul with your love and your peace.

I'm sorry for the times when I've put things in the way of you being able to work in me.  
I want to follow you, to do your will and walk in your ways of love.  
I surrender all that I am and have to you, to serve you as and where you choose.  
I want to be part of your church, a church that serves you and isn't afraid to follow you into new places and new ways of worshipping.  
I offer you my life and the life of this church, because I am yours and we are yours and we belong to you.  
Thank you Lord Jesus. Amen

### **Hymn [STF 385]**

Holy Spirit, we welcome you  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Move among us with holy fire,  
As we lay aside all earthly desires,  
Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Let the breeze of Your presence blow,  
That Your children here might truly know  
How to move in the Spirit's flow.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Please accomplish in me today  
Some new work of loving grace, I pray;  
Unreservedly have Your way.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

*Christopher Alan Bowater (b.1947) ©1986 Sovereign Lifestyle Music Ltd*

### **Prayers for others and ourselves**

Let's hold before God in the quiet the people who are on our hearts at this time...  
People near at hand – those we know and love who are struggling with illness, or stress, or depression or loneliness...  
Those who have lost loved ones.....  
Those who are working to support and care for others, providing practical and pastoral support in different ways and places.....  
Those who are anxious or afraid, for themselves or for others.....

Those who battle poverty, who live in places where there is no access to clean water or enough food, who have no safe place to sleep, no access to healthcare or education....  
Those who are in positions of authority and leadership, whose decisions affect the lives of others

Be with them all, Lord, we pray;  
fill them and all who work with them with your Spirit of love & compassion;  
Bring peace, bring hope,  
Bring justice, bring transformation,  
Bring a fair sharing of resources so that everyone can have the fullness of life that is your desire for each & every one of us.  
And show us how we can be an answer to our own prayers, which we offer in the name of Jesus, our Risen Lord and Saviour.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Hymn [STF 395]**

Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me,  
Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me:  
Break me, melt me,  
Mould me, fill me.  
Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me,  
Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me,  
Shape me, bend me,  
Rouse me, send me.  
Spirit of the Living God,  
Fall afresh on me.

*Daniel Iverson (1890 – 1977) & Jane Wilson*

#### **Blessing**

May God the Father bless us;  
May Jesus Christ take care of us;  
May the Holy Spirit enlighten us  
all the days of our life.  
The Lord be our Defender  
and Keeper of body and soul,  
both now and for ever,  
to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

*(The Book of Cerne, 9<sup>th</sup> century)*