

**DSW Written service**  
**Sunday 29 June 2025**

**Call to Worship**

*"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High; to declare Your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night.*

**Prayer**

Loving Father, we praise you for the beauty of your creation and the world you have created to provide for all our needs.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for showing us heaven on earth, leaving aside your majesty to take on our wrongdoing and defeating the power of sin and death to set us free.

Holy Spirit, source of new life, we praise you for your presence with us and within us, guiding and calling us to follow the way of Jesus and bear the fruits of God's kingdom.

Lord God, we marvel that through the ages you have called ordinary people to follow you. And when they listened, amazing things have happened! And now, it's us that you call!

Thank you for the new life we have in you, for all the ways in which you have blessed us, and for the gift of the freedom you offer us, to become our best selves in you.

**Amen**

**Hymn [STF 553]**

I am a new creation  
No more in condemnation,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.  
My heart is overflowing,  
My love just keeps on growing,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.

And I will praise You Lord,  
Yes, I will praise You Lord,  
And I will sing of all that You have done.

A joy that knows no limit,  
A lightness in my spirit,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.

*Dave Bilbrough, ©1983 Kingsway's Thankyou Music.*

**Reading: Galatians 5:13-26 The Message**

<sup>13-15</sup> It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

<sup>16-18</sup> My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are contrary to each other, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

<sup>19-21</sup> It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.

<sup>22-23</sup> But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our

way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

<sup>23-24</sup> Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.

<sup>25-26</sup> Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

**SONG: STF 395 + additional verse:**

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) and Jane Wilson*

**Reflection**

I wonder what you think of when you hear someone described as “a free spirit”? What images and qualities does that call to mind?

In this passage Paul has a lot to say about freedom - he’s keen to emphasise to the new Christians in Galatia that the new life God offers us in Jesus is all about freedom, but not the kind of “freedom” that the world promotes (in his time and ours!)

We might ask: Freedom from what? Freedom to do what?

Paul explains that when we live in Jesus’ way, what we’re freed from is selfishness & self-centredness, legalism and rule-keeping for rule-keeping’s sake, and trying to get our own way all the time - which is an interesting and countercultural concept of freedom isn’t it?

And he argues that what we’re freed to do is to serve and love each other, because that in itself is an act of true freedom. And that’s another amazing thought isn’t it? Loving others as you love yourself is an act of freedom!

It puts a whole new light on the idea of freedom fighting doesn’t it? Remember those old posters of Jesus looking a bit like the so-called freedom fighter Che Guevara? Imagine fighting for the freedom to love other people as much as we love ourselves!

Someone once said that one of the amazing things about Jesus is that he didn’t tell his disciples to love him, he told them to love each other, because that’s how people would know they were his followers.

As usual Paul is very up front and doesn’t pull any punches in what he writes. He reminds us that we’ve got a root of self interest in us which is at odds with the freedom God offers through his Spirit, so we need to make the right choice about what we do with the freedom we’ve been given.

He gives a list of what can happen if we make the wrong choice, and even though this Message version uses different language from that we find in more traditional translations of this passage, the things he lists still ring true nearly 2000 years after they were written and are still happening in our world today.

Paul affirms that when we choose to follow Jesus and take up the life of the Spirit, we are freed from the need to get our own way, and from “mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities”.

And it’s still relevant to remember that even in our modern Western world context in which we are bombarded by adverts trying to persuade us that we “need” this or that product or way of life, we don’t need to respond to those temptations because we’re following a different path which puts the way of Jesus at the centre of our lives. And that each of us is an original!

In the traditional versions of this passage Paul lists 9 “fruits of the Spirit” and it’s interesting to see how the Message version translates those qualities in verses 22 and 23 above.

Perhaps this week we could usefully spend some time sitting quietly in prayer with God in Jesus, reflecting on each of those 9 qualities and asking Him to show us where he is calling us to make some changes in our lives, or to speak to us about people or situations in our lives where we might need a bit more love, or affection, or patience, or commitment. We might want to make a note of the things that occur to use in our prayer time and ask God to give us more of these traits, and bear more of those “fruits”.

The Prayers below are based on the fruits of the Spirit.

The first is called a breathing prayer, a way of letting go of self and letting God come in, opening our hearts to make room for the Holy Spirit to come in, as we allow our natural breathing to become part of our praying.

### **The Breathing Prayer**

So as we breathe out, we bring before God times when we have been unloving and hateful and as we breathe in we ask God to replace that hate with love.....

We breathe out all our worries....our complaints..

We breathe in God's joy

We breathe out our stress and anxiety, our anger with others

We breathe in God's peace

We breathe out our impatience, our willingness to take offence

We breathe in God's patience

We breathe out our unkindness and thoughtlessness

We breathe in the Spirit's kindness & understanding

We breathe out our annoyance, our selfish desires

We breathe in Jesus' goodness

We breathe out our doubts, our fickleness, our urge to give up when things get tough

We breathe in God's faithfulness

We breathe out our harshness, hardness of heart, our refusal to see things from another's point of view

We breathe in Jesus' gentleness

We breathe out our recklessness, bad habits, our tendency to indulge ourselves

We breathe in the Spirit's self-control

We breathe out our wrongdoing

We breathe in God's forgiveness and the fresh start that he gives us through His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of His Holy Spirit  
**Amen.**

### **Prayers for Others**

Wonderful God,

With wonder in your creation and your creative power in every creature and person,  
With those who seek to sustain your creation and those who suffer the effects of our selfish use of your world's resources

We pray : **Holy Spirit, let love shine through us.**

With all who rejoice in new life, in work that gives dignity, in every gift you bestow on us, and with those whose lives have known despair & pain

We pray: **Holy Spirit, let joy shine through us.**

With all who long for wholeness, resolution of conflicts, and wars to cease,

With those who suffer from violence whether physical, emotional or spiritual,

We pray : **Holy Spirit, let peace shine through us.**

With all who suffer injustice, and who long for freedom from the frustration that tempts us to a rash response and prevents us from walking in the shoes of another

We pray: **Holy Spirit, let your patience shine through us.**

With all whom we consider enemies, all whom we know as neighbours and colleagues, with each other, and with those who suffer the cruelty of ignorance, prejudice or dismissal we pray: **Holy Spirit, let kindness shine through us.**

With all who hunger, all who are poor, all who are sick, lonely, or imprisoned, Remembering especially those known to us who are in need...

We pray: **Holy Spirit, let your deep down goodness shine through us.**

With all who doubt, all who face what appears to be impossible, and all who fear that your kingdom may not coming among us

We pray : **Holy Spirit, let faith shine through us.**

With all who have power and authority,  
especially leaders of nations, leaders of  
corporations, communities, and congregations  
We pray: Holy Spirit, **let gentleness shine through us.**

With all before us, and with us, and yet to  
come, who seek to live in the way of Jesus that  
leads to freedom and fullness of life,  
We pray: Holy Spirit, **let self-discipline shine through us.**

**Amen**

*(adapted from a prayer by Taylor Burton-Edwards, © 2007,  
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### **Hymn [STF 563]**

○ Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
Lord, be forever near me,  
my Master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle  
if you are by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if you will be my guide.

○ let me feel you near me!  
The world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but Jesus, now draw nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

○ let me hear you speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will.  
○ speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
Lord, speak, and make me listen,  
○ guardian of my soul.

○ Jesus, you have promised  
to all who follow you  
that where you are in glory  
your servant shall be too.  
And Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;

○ give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend.

*John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)*

### **Blessing**

Let us go out with joy,  
with love and in peace,  
as bearers of the fruits of the Spirit  
and bringers of the good news  
of freedom in God through Jesus  
And may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
go with us and remain with us always.

**Amen**

*Rev'd Jane Wilson  
June 2025*

