



Gathering prayer/Call to worship (*Psalm 24*)

*"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it **The world, and those who live in it.**"*

Whether we know it or not **God is present.**

For we are made in God's image **and gather in God's name.**

First Hymn STF658 – A charge to keep

Watch on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M-64OwBK1E>

A charge to keep I have:
a God to glorify;
a never-dying soul to save,
and fit it for the sky;

Arm me with jealous care,
as in your sight to live;
and O your servant, Lord,
prepare a strict account to give!

To serve the present age,
my calling to fulfil;
O may it all my powers engage
to do my master's will!

Help me to watch and pray,
and on yourself rely,
so shall I not my trust betray,
nor love within me die.
Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayers (based on Romans 8.26-39)

Listening God,
hear our silence and our fear of praying: we worry that we will use the wrong words; too often we cannot find words that begin to express how we feel; we feel too small when faced with your greatness. So here our silence and send your Spirit to pray for us.

Silence

Loving God,
we know that all things work together for good for those who love you; yet we forget the extent of your love. You are for us! Who can be against us? *And* why do we worry, is our faith so weak? Remind us again that you did not withhold your own Son but gave him up for all - even us.

Silence

Living God,
nothing in all creation can separate any of us from your love in Jesus Christ. Nothing - not a thing! We turn away from even small problems, we hate to be uncomfortable or inconvenienced; we give in so easily.

Silence

Help us to believe the promise of your abiding, eternal love which is present through death, through life, through past, present and future.

Grant us the gift of faith which allows us to be truly **‘faith-full’**, to be effective disciples and willing storytellers *of the truth*, proclaiming the gospel of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer – Contemporary

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Second Hymn 419 - Almighty God, we come to make confession, (*The last two lines of each verse are repeated.*)

Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/uBFik8SfJFA?feature=shared>

Almighty God, we come to make confession,
for we have sinned in thought and word and deed.
We now repent in honesty and sorrow; forgive us,
Lord, and meet us in our need.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all that I have failed to do this day;
of help withheld, concern and love restricted,
forgive me, Lord, and lead me in your way.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all the harm and hurt that I have done;
of bitter words and many selfish actions,
forgive me, Lord, and make me like your Son.

Redeeming God, we come to seek forgiveness,
for Jesus Christ has died to set us free.
Forgive the past and fill us with your Spirit
that we may live to serve you joyfully.

Christopher J. Ellis (b. 1949) Words: © 1998, Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Buxhall, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3BW Used by permission.

1st Reading: John 3:7-15 'The wind blows wherever it pleases'

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.' 'How can that be possible?' asked Nicodemus. 'You, a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things!' replied Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak about things in this world, how are you going to believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things?

No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

2nd Reading: John 17:11-19 'Protect them from the evil one'

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

'Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and while still in the world I say these things to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'

Hymn 481 (Psalm 23)

Watch on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

and he anoints my head with oil;
and my cup — it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.
Chorus: And I will trust in you alone,

**Chorus: And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

And though I walk the darkest path
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Chorus: And I will trust in you alone,

Reflections - 'The wind blows wherever it pleases'

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray, Gracious God as your people gathered at this time we offer our worship in Thanksgiving. Open your words to our hearts and may our hearts be receptive to your word. We pray in the name of God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit **Amen**.

Jesus speaks about the wind in our Gospel reading today. He says, 'The wind blows where it pleases'. The wind is beyond our control. It doesn't blow where and when we want it to blow. We can harness the wind to some good purpose (using wind turbines for example), but we are never in control of it. Jesus often spoke about day-to-day realities, like the wind, as a way of talking about more spiritual realities. In speaking about the wind Jesus is, in reality, speaking about the Holy Spirit, 'This is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit', he says. In fact, in Hebrew, the same word could mean either 'wind' or 'Spirit'. Jesus seems to be saying to Nicodemus and to us that the Spirit of God is not something we can control.

On a recent Mediterranean Cruise, our first stop was La Havre in France. Although we arrived on a dismal Sunday, the only thing offered was a flea market about to close even. However, Claude Monet is said to have spent many blissful summers in this seaside resort, with his family and the subject of this, his 1867 painting of the Garden at Sainte-Adresse, Le Havre. In the painting, one can almost feel the wind in the painting, with the flags waving; the waves of the sea are stirred up by the winds, and the wind playing in the smoke emanating from the steamboats in the background.

However, in this passage, Jesus says that we can neither take nor control where we want Spirit to go; the Spirit takes us where God wants us to go! All we can do is to surrender to the wind; that breath of the Spirit within us and around us, to allow the Spirit to direct us and to lead us. Like a flag blowing in the wind, we are to move in response to the movement of the Spirit.

In the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples and us, the 'Our Father', which we said earlier it concludes with the petitions: 'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'. Jesus knows that there are many influences in our world trying to knock us off course. Yet, as Jesus says to God in the reading, 'I am not asking you to remove the temptations from the world'. Rather, He pleads for protection to help us live out our faith in the world, with all the temptations and darkness that we experience at times. Jesus understood the challenges we face in maintaining our relationship with God, and how our faith, hope, and love may be tested in various ways. Life and ministry will continue to present us with trials and temptations that can divert us from our intended path. We can easily lose our way when faced with unexpected obstacles or temptations.

In Luke 24:35-48 we hear again Jesus' first words 'Peace be with you!' to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. To put this into context, Jesus said these words to calm the disciples who were in a state of alarm and fright upon seeing Jesus again. But on this occasion, the peace Jesus meant was something far deeper than just a mere call to calm down. If we go back a step to Good Friday, the disciples had largely abandoned Jesus during his Passion. So, when Jesus says, 'Peace be with you', he shows them that he has forgiven them, and that they and Jesus now must move on and work together to bring the Good News to the world. For it is this peace, and the forgiveness it holds, that will make them and us preach to all the nations. Again, Jesus repeats his peace in John 14.27: 'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you in'.

Christ is talking of a different kind of peace here to His disciples as He prepares to leave them. It is the peace that extends far beyond any earthly peace that we know; 'a peace the world cannot give is my gift to you,' Jesus says. Peace for Jesus is not simply the absence of violence or oppression. Peace for Jesus (and His gift to us) is something much more positive, much deeper: it is not something temporal and external... it is both external and internal!

These are the same words we use at Holy Communion, 'Peace be with you'. This is also what we tell each other when we exchange the sign of peace. It is an exchange of commitment to our faith and the bond that we share, uniting ourselves to all the 'other' people in church. Our faith is a communal faith.

So, why go off piste from the lectionary assigned for today and choose this one. Well, I do so, in obedient response and surrender to the Spirit's direction to new and pastures green. Well not exactly like Monet's painting but there's greenery! Nonetheless, I do so, asking for both God's protection and for His gift of peace on those whom He entrusted in my care through the invitation of the circuit over the past two years.

For it is this peace, and the forgiveness it holds, and which through the Holy Spirit, that will enable us to continue to preach to all the nations in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us pray

Thank you, Jesus, for forgiving us, help us to do better in future and give us strength to continue to do your will in your name we pray. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercessions/for others

God who speaks in silence God who spoke to Elijah in sheer silence speak to us now.

Help us to be quiet enough to hear the voiceless. Help us to listen to the excluded, the stranger and the unexpected. Open our ears and our hearts to your word.

God who brought Elijah out of hiding call to us now. Confront us with the task you have for us. Challenge us with uncomfortable truths. Turn our comfort into action.

God who spoke to Mary through an Angel speak to us now. Help us to be bearers of your word. Help us to face a hostile world with courage. Open our lives to the possibility of new life within us.

God who brought Jairus' daughter out of death call to us now. Grant us new life transformed by your love. Give us new opportunities to serve you. Turn our disease into healing love.

Take our noise and quieten us. Take our silence and hear us. Take our injured voices and he lists, that we may shout for you, listen to you and work for you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

A prayer for offering

God of all goodness and grace, receive the gifts we offer; and grant that our whole life may give you glory and praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Hymn - 404 - God's spirit

Watch on YouTube - <https://youtu.be/L-ibXHqsUTw?feature=shared>

God's spirit is in my heart;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do:

Refrain:

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down-trodden free,
and go tell everyone
the news that the kingdom of God has come;
and go tell everyone
the news that God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,

so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world
the whole of the world:

Refrain: He sent me to give the good news to the poor,

Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep
can earn their own keep:

Refrain: He sent me to give the good news to the poor,

Don't worry what you have to say;
don't worry, because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart
will speak in your heart:

Refrain: He sent me to give the good news to the poor,

v. 1 and refrain Alan T. Dale (1902–1979) vv. 2–4 Hubert Richards (b. 1921)

Benediction

May God, who called the world into being, who breathed life, who provides new strength, bless you. May the God whose love does not know borders nor walls, whose justice will come, who casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly, bless you and keep you. **Amen.**

The service has been put together with sources from the following: Church of Scotland - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2024-july/sunday-14-july-2024-eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b#topic3> Christian Art © 2024 Christian Art Network Limited
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