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ORDINARY 12C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Call to worship

Sit down, close your eyes and breathe 3 deep, slow breaths.

Keeping your eyes closed - pay attention to your breath for a minute or more and in doing so, when you breathe in, imagine you are breathing in the love of God.

When you open your eyes look around you, what do you notice in your room that reminds you of the love of God?

If this is something you can hold, hold it, if it is to be looked at, look at it. As you do so, remember that you are in the presence of God.

When you are ready, offer this time of worship to God

“Around me and within me, Spirit of God I thank you for your presence here. I offer each breath in worship to you.”

Amen.¹

Hymn:

20 STF – Be still for the presence of the Lord - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Great Creator God, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with awe:
we see your glory in the night sky, the moon and stars shining on, century after century,
we see your glory in the land around our feet, beauty and abundance to sustain life,
we see your glory in all people, humankind made in your image,
we worship you.

Jesus Christ our Redeemer, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with praise:
you are the timeless Word of God, through whom all things were created,
you are the incarnate Word of God, demonstrating life in all its fullness,
you are the eternal Word of God, present with us now and to the end of the age,
we worship you.

Holy Spirit, Energy of God, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with wonder:
we feel you sweeping across the earth now, as you swept over the waters at creation
we feel you stirring your church now, as you first stirred the church at Pentecost,
we feel you connecting your worldwide family now, as we are joined with one another,
we worship you.

Gracious God, One-in-Three and Three-in-One, accept our worship, our praise and our wonder.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

Reveal again to us your great glory through your Living Word, as we are transformed by your tireless Spirit.

We worship you.

Amen.²

You may now wish to say the Lord's prayer in whatever tradition or translation you find most comfortable.

Readings: [Luke 8:26-39](#)

Responding to the reading

What has been the biggest change in your life since the beginning of the pandemic, over two years ago?

Have you found yourself wondering, whether we admit it to yourself or not, 'where is God' in all this?

In times like these, especially when it's hard to feel God close to us, it's comforting to be reminded that a gift from God moves among us. This gift is everywhere we go, whether we feel their presence or not. This is the gift that Jesus first spoke of to his followers before his ascension, which was another time of great fear and uncertainty. The disciples, tasked with building Jesus' church, were facing the prospect of losing the man who had led them, taught them and changed their lives. They were preparing to enter a new phase of their lives, one without Jesus by their side. Not only that, their new life would be founded on the vital, world-changing, boundary-breaking, radical work the very same Jesus was calling them to do.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear", Jesus said. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth." As he prepared to go and sit at God's right hand, Jesus reminded his friends they would never be alone. Here is the mystery and wonder of the Trinity; the man Jesus would no longer be among them, but the Spirit of God would be. Last week, on Trinity Sunday, we gave thanks for the gift of the God who is Creator, Spirit, and Christ. Today, we celebrate that Spirit again. The Spirit who - through Jesus - is driving out 'demons' as appears to happen in today's gospel reading.

Through the Spirit, we are brought into closer relationship with God, and connected to the man who came in human form to minister to the world over two thousand years ago. The Trinity spans time and space, bringing God close to God's people wherever and whenever they are. Jesus always has so much more to say to us than he shares in the moment, and the changes develop over a lifetime; this is where the Spirit comes in. It is our constant companion through life's changing scenes, always there to guide us into the next phase of truth.

² Opening prayers written by Jill Baker

The Spirit moves with us and, through its power and presence, we can refine what we knew before, or challenge what we thought we knew. What is God saying to us in the midst of these turbulent times? What is our challenge for today? How do we move forwards? What is the Spirit trying to show us?

Professor Anthony Reddie, in his work on Black Theology, developed an activity to conduct in a group setting, perhaps in a Bible study or other gathering. In it, he would traditionally play the role of host, presenting the gathered community a scenario: Our church is hosting a fellowship meal. The menu has two choices: the “standard meal”, which is available to everyone, or “your favourite meal”. Each member of the community is asked individually to choose whether they would like to have the standard meal or their favourite meal. As the exercise progresses, the leader approaches each person, who gives their answer, and then challenges them on it. Are you sure you want the standard meal? Imagine how good it would be to have your very favourite meal in front of you. Or... Are you happy with your choice? Do you know what the standard meal is? It’s probably really good, and everyone else is having it. The whole point is to make them doubt themselves, think again, before sticking by their choice or going for the other. Reddie describes the various permutations of the exercise, highlighting the parallels with church community.

Perhaps these are the questions the Spirit is guiding us to ask ourselves. Does our church make everyone show up and act in a certain way? Does our worshipping style force people to adapt to something very different from what they grew up with? Do our traditions make people feel like outsiders? Conversely, do we give everyone who enters our space the room to be themselves? Do we let everyone have their “favourite meal”, and sit together at one table, sharing in each other’s uniqueness? Is the Spirit moving us to consider how we extend the hand of welcome? Can we hear it challenging us to question whether we have made our siblings in Christ feel that they are truly included, truly loved and truly free?

How comfortable are you with the idea of the Holy Spirit? Are there ways in which you listen to the Spirit’s prompting?

Many Christians describe finding this third element of the Trinity to be the most difficult to grasp or understand, but perhaps that is the point...

This week, and in the weeks ahead, see if you can find out a little bit more about the Holy Spirit. You might like to find some books or a podcast that discuss the role of the Spirit in different traditions, or ask some people in your church to try to find words to describe who the Spirit is and how She fits into the wider image people have of who God is.

As you learn, listen, be still, make space...and let the voice of God-who-is-Spirit speak to you.³

Hymn:

255 STF – The Kingdom of God is justice and joy - [YouTube](#)

³ Reflection including some material from Emma Dobson’s reflection written for The Vine. For the full Vine resources, find out if your circuit is signed up for a subscription from Twelve Baskets

Blessing

As I rise from this moment, I will never be the same again.
This day and beyond, I will seek to follow you, my God, into the week ahead.
I will go where you will lead me.
Lead me, heavenly father, lead me.
Amen.⁴

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 20th June

- A prayer for refugee week (20-26th June 2022) from All We Can:
- You may wish to light a candle as a sign of light in the darkness as you pray for people who have been displaced or are living as refugees all over the world today.
- Loving and tender God, today we pray for the Rohingya people living in the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – in particular those affected by the recent fire in the camp.
- This day, we hold before you all those who are found longing for a place to call home.
- We pray for peace in the homeland of refugees fleeing conflict and that all involved might find boldness and humility to build societies where all feel safe.
- At this time, we remember Christ the bringer of peace;
- Come shine your light to shine upon the refugee and those suffering this day.
- Bring peace, healing, and above all, a sense of belonging for all.
- Amen

Tuesday 21st June

- When all around is noisy and busy, help me in this moment to be still with you
- *Silence*
- When my mind is chaotic and full of wondering, help me in this moment to be sure of you
- *Silence*
- When my soul is troubled, help me in this moment to be calmed by you
- *Silence*
- If you feel able speak these words aloud: 'Still, calm and sure I offer this day to you, O God.'

⁴ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Wednesday 22nd June

A prayer written amongst the conflict in Ukraine, as part of Refugee Week 2022, from All We Can.

- God of all grace,
Amidst all that we don't understand,
Surrounded by images and stories of violence and conflict,
We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine,
and all who live in fear this day.
- Our prayers of lament are also prayers of empathy,
And prayers for a peaceful resolution,
Prayers for a world where there is no more war,
No more suffering, no more needless death.
This day, and every day, grant us your peace.
- Amen.

Thursday 23rd June

- Today is International Widows Day, as marked by the United Nations.
- In the quiet, just offer some prayers for whatever emotions and connections that brings to mind for you. Whether they are prayers for yourself, for others, or connections to Biblical stories about widows...
- Just allow the space to be one where you lament with those who are grieving, and perhaps your prayers might prompt you to offer comfort to someone today.

Friday 24th June

- Some church traditions mark today as the birth date of John the Baptist including, in some Easter Orthodox traditions, accompanying the feast day with an all-night vigil.
- John's ministry went on to play a vital role in preparing the way for Jesus but, like all of us, his life began small, born as a baby into a family who hoped he might make something of himself.
- Today, why not pray for the little tiny things that are happening in your life, community and church. At the moment, they may seem very small and insignificant. But perhaps they, too, have a role in shepherding the Kingdom of God a little closer?

Saturday 25th June

- Take a moment to be peaceful. If you are able you may like to plant your feet on the floor and concentrate on your body being still (if this is hard then just sit quietly and comfortably). Notice how you feel and what you are thinking about and let those things float away giving thanks for each even if they are difficult feelings or thoughts.
- When you are ready, raise your hands open before you and give thanks for the moment you are in. Pause.
- Place your open hands on your lap and consider all that's happened this week and what you might want to lay down before God asking for help or offering thanks. Pause.

- Lift one hand high in the air and think about what you will offer of yourself as you worship today. Pause.
- Lower your hands and offer the following prayer:
- Loving God, I am here, help me to notice you here, with me in this moment.
- Amen.