

Thy Kingdom Come

A SERVICE FOR USE DURING THE GLOBAL PRAYER INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION

'Thy Kingdom Come' is a global prayer movement, inviting Christians around the world to pray between Ascension and Pentecost that for more people to come to know Jesus Christ. It began in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England, and has burgeoned into an international and ecumenical call to prayer. The invitation to join in is a very open one, and churches and parishes can do so in various ways: there are a wide variety of resources and suggestions on the website: www.thykingdomcome.global.

Celebrating and anticipating the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, both on the particular date 50 days after the resurrection of Christ, and in terms of the ongoing presence and renewal of the Spirit today and the wider contemporary mission of the Church, encompasses a vast array of potential activities and foci. The resources on the internet provide a treasure-house of frequently updated content, and there are suggested liturgies for prayer and worship produced by the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches respectively – these are well worth investigating. For example, the Methodist Church have produced an outline for daily prayer, and there are resources for journeying with Mary, eucharistic propers, an 11-day devotional offered by Christian Aid, and material for use with young people in schools, clubs and at home.

In keeping with the RSCM's long heritage of supporting choral music, here is a suggested liturgical plan for a service (perhaps to replace choral evensong) for churches that have 'Quires and Places where they sing'. This kind of service may provide an opportunity for singers and worshippers to gather to enjoy the spiritual gift of music, expressed through the centuries in glorious harmony and melody, connecting a biblical journey with songs of praise and the spiritual uplift of prayer in the Spirit. Many will be familiar with the approach typified by the Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols, extended into Advent carol services, and more recently into Epiphany and Passiontide liturgies. This, we hope, is something in the same vein: a service of lessons and music for Ascensiontide that expresses and celebrates the eternal and universal prayer that 'thy Kingdom come'.

THE SERVICE

The suggested service should last about an hour, but pieces may be substituted for items of similar feel and duration according to repertoire and preference.

For an extensive list of appropriate anthems see Issue 83 pages 36–37 and the RSCM website (www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/liturgy-worship/planning-worship/). As with carol services, it may be appropriate to alter the positioning and number of hymns or anthems, depending on whether or not a sermon is included.

There is some movement through the building suggested, and this can give spiritual as well as literal direction. A very straightforward way is to start at the back of the church with an unaccompanied introit (plainsong is suggested), as the organ may be too far away for ease of accompaniment. The main part of the service can be done in choir stalls or at the front of the church, and the final hymn could well be a recessional. This movement may also reflect the liminality of the service: the emotional and spiritual dynamic, which begins gently, building through a liturgical as well as musical crescendo to the final prayer and hymn. Care should always be taken to avoid an emotional rollercoaster in a service, and to create a pattern and 'journey' that makes sense not only spiritually and biblically but emotionally.

Hymns and choral items have been suggested, but different worship styles and resources can be substituted. Care should be taken if mixing lots of different music genres, but there is no reason why a service such as this could not include contemplative chant singing, plainsong, Taizé, Iona or songs by Margaret Rizza. The main issue here is that as well as liturgical liminality the service would benefit from musical integrity and coherence.

It is generally thought a good thing if there is some kind of sermon, address or homily on occasions such as this, but inevitably, local custom will affect any decision on this, as it will in terms of what form prayers should take. Similarly, the use of incense or candle-lighting (during a hymn or anthem, perhaps) can be incorporated as extra dimensions of prayer according to preference, custom or adventurousness.

Gordon Giles

THE LITURGY

(Bold type signifies words for all to say)

The congregation gathers at the back of the church.

Welcome

Choir Introit: *Veni Creator Spiritus/Come, Holy Ghost* (plainsong)

Processional Hymn: *Come down, O Love divine*

During the hymn the congregation and choir proceed to their places.

Greeting

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people
and kindle in us the fire of your love.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.

Renew the face of your creation, Lord, pouring on us the gifts of your Spirit,
and kindle in us the fire of your love.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Bidding and Lord's Prayer

Following the example of the disciples who prayed continuously between the Ascension and Pentecost, there has arisen a tradition in the Church to pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit at this time of year. In recent years many Christian denominations worldwide have responded to an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York by joining in the 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer initiative. In doing so, we renew our desire for the kingdom of God to be made real in the lives of those we know and love through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we meet to celebrate anew the coming of God's kingdom and to pray for the renewing gift of the Holy Spirit, we recall in Scripture the presence of God's Spirit in the lives of his people, from the act of creation to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Let us then so celebrate this gift with our anthems and hymns of praise, that our lives may be inspired by God's love; that we may bear witness to his salvation and so bring hope and light to all who live in ignorance or rejection of his saving power. So first we pray for God's world: for the poor and helpless; the aged and infirm; children and those responsible for their care and education; the cold, the hungry and the homeless; the victims of poverty, injustice and oppression; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; those in despair or in the shadow of death. May the Holy Spirit bring them comfort and hope.

Then, as we hear of the spiritual gifts of love and joy and peace, we pray for the leaders of the nations, that all may be inspired to work together for the establishment of justice, freedom and peace throughout the world. And that we may bear true witness to this hope in a divided world, we pray for the peace and unity of Christ's Body, the universal Church, that the whole earth may share the good news of Christ and live to praise his name.

Finally, as we rejoice with the saints in heaven and on earth, we remember all who have gone before us with the sign of faith, whose hope was in the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we offer up our prayers for the coming of his kingdom, in the words he himself has taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Choir Anthem: *Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire* (Attwood)

The First Lesson: Genesis 2.5–24

Hymn: *She sits like a bird* (Bell and Maule)

Choir Anthem: *Listen, sweet dove* (Ives)

The Second Lesson: Ezekiel 37.1–14

Hymn: *Breathe on me, breath of God*

Choir Anthem: *A setting of 'Send forth your Spirit, O Lord'* (Psalm 104.26–36)

The Third Lesson: Galatians 5.16–26

Hymn: *Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost*

The Fourth Lesson: John 14.16–18; 16.4b–15

Choir Anthem: *If ye love me* (Tallis)

The Fifth Lesson: Acts 1.1–11; 2.1–4

Hymn: *O Thou who camest from above*

A sermon, meditation or homily may be given.

Choir Anthem: *Holy Spirit, come confirm us* (Dean)

Collect and Blessing

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

May the God of life and love, whose Son was victorious over sin and death, make us alive with his life, that the whole world may resound with his praise; and the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Recessional Hymn: *The Spirit lives to set us free ('Walk in the Light')*

or *Forth in the peace of Christ we go*

Dismissal

God of our salvation, hope of all the ends of the earth, we pray:

Thy kingdom come.

That the world may know Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace, we pray:

Thy kingdom come.

That we may be bold to speak the word of God while you stretch out your hand to save, we pray:

Thy kingdom come.

That the Church may be generous in giving, faithful in serving, bold in proclaiming, we pray:

Thy kingdom come.

That the day may come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, we pray:

Thy kingdom come.

This service is available to download at: www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/liturgy-worship/planning-worship

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