



**Sunday Worship for 5th July
Fourth Sunday after Trinity**



Introduction

Though we cannot come together physically, we gather spiritually as the family of God in our Father's presence to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his holy word, to bring before him the needs of the world, to ask forgiveness for our sins and to seek his grace, that, through his son Jesus Christ we may give ourselves for his service.

Service leader's intro from Trevor Birtle

Welcome to our service today. Throughout June we explored four important women in the bible and this proved to be an excellent theme. Throughout July we are turning our attention to consider the work of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity. Paul Arnold has prepared our talk and Cheryl has contributed our intercessory prayers.

Please read through the service at your own pace. Links to the songs today are written in blue and can be pasted into your browser to open YouTube words and music. You might of course prefer to read or sing the words yourself.

I do hope and pray this service will be a blessing to you.

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

And also with you

**Lord, direct our thoughts
teach us to pray.**

**Lift up our hearts to worship you
in spirit and in truth
through Jesus Christ.**

Amen

The night has passed and the day lies open before us. Let us pray with one heart and mind.
Silence is kept

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
So may the light of your presence, O God,
Set our hearts on fire with love for you;
Now and forever.

Amen

Song: Holy Spirit We Welcome You

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=holy+spirit+we+welcome+you+lyrics&docid=608015043722218052&mid=13459579E69048DC58EF13459579E69048DC58EF&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

**holy spirit, we welcome you
holy spirit, we welcome you**

**move amongst us with holy fire
as we lay aside all earthly desire
hands reach out and 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**

**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**

**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**

Confession

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you,
through our own fault,
in thought, and word, and deed,
and in what we have left undone.
We are heartily sorry,
and repent of all our sins
For your Son our Lord
Jesus Christ's sake,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself,
and cleanse us from all our sins
that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Readings

Acts 6: 1-7

6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Mark 1: 14-20

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Talk (by Paul Arnold)

Holy Spirit: Planning For the Future



New Series!

Good morning everyone, I want to tell you first what a joy and a privilege it is to be opening this brand new series on the Holy Spirit today. We will be taking a look at different aspects of the work of the Spirit following the book of Acts, but perhaps not the passages that everyone expects! Our series will look at how the work of the Holy Spirit is involved in:

- Planning for the Future (Acts 6.1-7)
- Invitation for Everyone (Acts 11.1-18)
- Riding the Storm (Acts 27.13-26)
- Telling Good News from Bad (Acts 28.17-30)

In each of these stories we see a common structure, sometimes explicit, sometimes more implicit, in the way the Holy Spirit works:

1. There is a **problem**
2. The disciples gather discuss and **pray**
3. The Spirit gives them a **Plan**
4. Which furthers the **Progress** of the Gospel

The Problem



So, in our passage today, the problem is that people that the church were trying to serve were being neglected. Why? Two reasons, one superficial and one at the heart of what is happening. Firstly, the church had grown big, we hear earlier in Acts of thousands being added to the number of disciples, and in verse one here it says '...the disciples were increasing number...'

Growth



Growth can be a problem. We can end up needing to run to catch up. So much so that people begin to complain, 'Where is our share?' But it is not just the growth but the *pace* of growth which seems to have the apostles stumped. If we aren't prepared for quick change brought about by the Spirit's movement we can end up like the apostles, running to play catch up. Two situations strike me at the moment: right now we are caught in the horns of this pandemic. There are people all over the place saying different things about

what may or may not need to be done, and just like in any crisis, our knowledge of the situation and the requirements of those in Government who hold us accountable, are changing on a daily basis. There is little in the way of good communication at best. And it leads people to believing that they are being neglected. That some needs don't seem to matter over others. We can run ourselves ragged trying to keep up, or we could take a breath, pray, get our priorities straight and make sure we are fixed on those.

Priorities



Well it appears that the apostles ('the 12') were taking on too much and had temporarily lost sight of their priorities. They had been called to serve, yes, but by prayer and serving the word. They were instead trying to do everything: prayer, teaching, leading, serving, administration. If they were running the church, they would be trying to be the vicar, the welcome team and the person making coffee all at once! No wonder they were missing people out. To top it off massive growth meant that this hard job was becoming impossible.

They had forgotten their priority – There are two really: one they state openly "prayer and serving the word." But another, more crucial one was given to them by Jesus in the Great Commission "Go! And make disciples..." They had been so fixated on everything that it seems their understanding of discipleship was not following Jesus' pattern. Discipleship is the movement from unbelief to belief in every aspect of a person's life, but they themselves needed schooling in the unbelief that God had given gifts to other people. This moment, here is God, through his Spirit, discipling the Apostles. Telling them "Do you believe that you are the only ones to be able to serve this community?" What happens when they are gone? What happens when there are just too many people to serve? Two choices: burnout, or raise up disciples. People to serve like them and release them into their service of praying and teaching that they had been called into they were so busy *doing* church that they were starting to forget to *be* church!

What gets in the way of us remembering our priority? If you are in leadership do you deliberately take time to find people to raise up that will ease the load? Is church a place you go to or who you are? The Good News here is that God in his grace, his unmerited favour to all of us, has given us plenty of resources to be church. Even in this time. The Great News for St Mary's is that there are plenty of people shouldering that burden.

What does this have to do with the Holy Spirit? At every step of the problem we see the movement of the Spirit: It is the Lord through his Spirit who is adding to the number of disciples. It is the Spirit that has filled

them with the power to act which has brought them here and given them compassion that knows the widows and orphans need food. But perhaps, it is a denial of the Spirit's work in others that has led them not to have already begun the process of building their team of missionary servants. Perhaps they still did not believe that God was the provider, and that therefore they needed to do everything?

So what did the disciples do? They gathered, they prayed.

Prayer

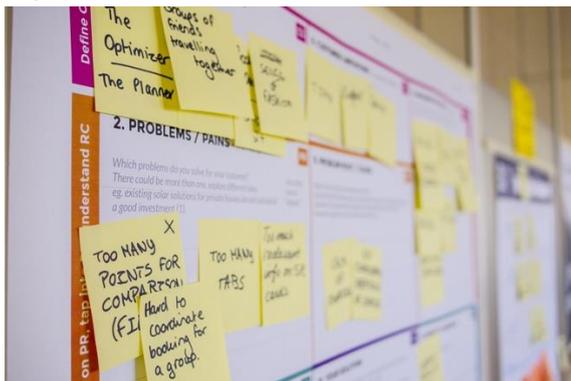


If I want to get someone's attention and help, I could make myself look really busy and overworked, or I could turn around directly and ask for help from someone who could give it. Until this point the apostles were looking busy.

I remember trying to put our big frame tent up at New Wine one year: Liz was looking after the kids, who insisted on running off every five minutes, and our tent was one of those that needs 8 people and a donkey to keep it upright...I spent about an hour struggling with this thing on my own, until Norman, a guy from Hartlepool tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I've been watching you struggling with this, can I help?" 25 minutes later the tent was up. At the end he turned to me and said with a smile "I don't know why you didn't ask for help sooner." There I was being gently schooled in the art of prayer. Being disciplined out of self-reliance and into reliance on God's provision through others.

The apostles prayed. I wonder if God was wondering why they hadn't asked earlier. What do we pray about? Are we sincerely seeking God's provision or do we think we know best? The Good News is that when we pray, God hears us and he answers us through his Spirit. It may not always be what we want or expect, but we are answered.

Plan



So what was the plan? Set aside some people who will serve. Easy! Why hadn't we thought of that? But what was the criteria to be used to identify these individuals? Were they caterers, able to make extra bread

for the widows and orphans? Were they accountants, able to somehow work the economies to get more resources to get greater provision and distribute fairly? No, the criteria was simple:

1. It was to be the **choice of the other disciples** – Chemistry with the disciples;
2. They were to be people **filled with wisdom** – Character to lead; and
3. They had to be people **filled with the Spirit** – Calling them into service.

Amongst them were Stephen, the first Martyr of the church and Nicolas of Antioch who was a convert to Judaism – so not even a born Jew, a big deal at the time. These were not necessarily the kinds of people that you would expect. A bit like the apostles themselves, perhaps. Yet they were who the Spirit chose. People able to take up the responsibility of service in their calling, character and chemistry.

What do we look for in those who lead? Are they people from amongst the disciples, filled with wisdom and the Spirit? Are they the result of prayer and discernment? Has the Spirit guided that choice? We need to answer these kinds of questions in a vacancy. Both of the candidates who come and of our own selves as we seek to lead. Have we brought these questions to the Spirit and asked for His guidance? Have we received the answers that we expect, or have we been surprised? I wonder if God has a surprise or two in store for us as church, particularly in the midst of this lockdown.

Progress



The real mark of the Spirit's move in this episode though is what happens next in v7. 'The word of God spread. The number of disciples increased rapidly...' By our fruit will we be known. If our fruit is one of division and backbiting then perhaps, like the disciples here, we need to take a step back. To pray. To seek God's surprising plan. And to move forward. The Spirit here, moves at his own pace.

It seems this episode may mark a stalling in the growth of the church: at the beginning the church grew – then complaints and there is a stumbling. What feels like a moment of pause as we go into the incident. The disciples need to gather and pray and seek. This takes time. It must have felt difficult, but only when they had the resources and the clear steer from God did things change again. The stall and pause, led to rapid growth led by the Spirit.

Are there times in our lives where we are eager to just get on with it? Where we have been frustrated by circumstances and think that we know exactly what we need to do and how? What is the first thing you do in those circumstances? What happens if someone objects? Do you see them as an obstacle in the way to your plan, or perhaps they may be calling for a pause, a moment to gather resources before a headlong rush into a situation. I wonder who called the Apostles together? I wonder how the apostles reacted? If it was me, I reckon I would be irritated: "I am so busy right now, can't you see? I need to get on with serving these people. I can't take the time to pause and pray it's all too urgent and I am the only one doing it!" What resolve to come together and seek agreement amongst themselves and all the disciples about the way forward.

I had to give a presentation about the Church Grafting project into St Paul's in Stockton two weeks ago now. Somehow I managed to squeeze the talk which was mandated to be 20 slides long - with things like safeguarding, budget, two year plan etc in it - into 15 minutes with 15 minutes of Q&A. The feedback was interesting but the most important was this.

"I love the ambition of what you are wanting to do and the image of God's heart in Stockton. Who is going to be your pacemaker? Who is the person to regulate the activity so you don't burnout? The annoying one who says "hold on a second"?"

What a fantastic question. Who is our pacemaker? Who will call us to regulate so that we do things in a way that is fully in step with what God wants? What does that mean for us right now? The joy is that God calls us to pause. He calls us to listen to him in prayer, to follow through his plan. When we do the conditions are fantastic for the growth of his kingdom. How do we know that the plans and activity are clearly of the Spirit? When we see God's fruit, God's progress in the fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control. When we assess how our plans have gone against these criteria that is when we can truly discern what is of God and what isn't.



So, let's pray –

Heavenly Father,
sometimes it is hard to discern you in the midst of our problems,
What is of you and what is our own foolish desires.
May your Spirit work in us,
cause us to pause, to pray, to plan and to progress in fruitfulness
and in obedience to your will.

Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named...**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts
through faith,
and fills us with his love...**

**We believe in God
the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high....**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Song: Breath on Me Breath of God

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=breathe+on+me+breath+of+god+lyrics&&view=detail&mid=4060DB60EFF80FE70DD94060DB60EFF80FE70DD9&rvsmid=F87A1595A3ACF78BC69EF87A1595A3ACF78BC69E&FORM=VDRVRV>

**Breathe on me, Breath of God
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure;
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God,
till I am wholly thine;
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God:
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.**



Prayers (written by Cheryl Moore)

Although we are currently physically apart God's love draws us together, so let us bring our cares and concerns and pray to Him now.

Father, we lean on your love as we pray for your Church. We pray for those in ordained and lay ministry, and for each person worshipping somewhere today especially those who face persecution for their faith. We thank you for Paul Clayton and Paul Arnold and all our leaders at St Mary's who

help us to be a Church where everyone is welcomed and valued and where we grow in faith. We continue to pray for John and Kathie Lambert as they move to new challenges and opportunities.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

Lord God, we lean on your wisdom as we pray for local, national and international leaders, subject to pressures and conflicting values. Pour your wisdom on those, often working behind the scenes to bring opposing factions together and may your spirit of forgiveness and justice permeate the social and political fabric of our world till we are able to rule wisely, discuss differences calmly and be able to negotiate rationally.

We pray for all leaders who are having to deal with and respond to the worldwide disruption of everyday life due to the Coronavirus pandemic. May they make considered decisions and support all those who are working to bring relief to the sick and to those striving to develop medications and find a cure.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

We bring before you Lord those living in towns and cities where there are areas of danger and corruption; where there is poor and overcrowded housing and where many people are homeless. We ask you to lift their spirits, give them hope of a better future and let them know that you care for each and every one. Father, help us to be more like you in dealings with the marginalised of our society. Transform through us places of poverty and change our attitudes for the better towards each other. Help us to demonstrate that all lives matter to you.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

Loving Father, we pray for our homes and outdoor spaces that they may be filled with your presence. Make them places of peace and kindness, of holiness and hospitality, of grace and goodness; that you may be known among us. We pray for our children as they face the changes that returning to school will bring and pray for their safety and that of the school staff. Lord help us to be more outward looking, to care for our neighbours and to be more aware of the needs of the people around us during these challenging times.

Lord in Your mercy Hear our prayer

Caring God, we pray for those working in hospitals, hospices and care homes; for the work and devotion of nurses and carers whose skill and compassion bring both material and spiritual comfort during these times of increased need. Strengthen them and give them stamina and courage to deal with the emotional and physical aspects of their work. We pray for those in the military who have been drafted in as part of the testing process and also remember all keyworkers who have continued to work to provide for our basic needs; some of whom have not seen their families for many weeks.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Father, we know your Son Jesus Christ understood people's fear and pain. We pray to you now for all suffering in body mind and spirit. Surround the frightened with your tenderness, give strength to those in pain, hold the weak in your arms of love and give patience to those who are recovering. In a time of silence, we bring before you those we know who are in need.

Faithful Lord we thank you for healing and for your strength that enables us to live through difficult times.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

Lord, we lean on that strength as we pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone near and dear to them, for members of our families who have died and whose anniversary we recall. Help us to experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within us and the church family around us; in the certain knowledge that we shall be reunited once more in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord in Your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

In every age Lord you have raised up men and women to reflect the light of Christ and to teach us the way of holiness. We thank you for those who have been mentors for our personal journeys. Help us to discern and use our gifts wisely in service to you and to reach out to those who have not yet heard the good news. We know that during this awful pandemic, new ways of broadcasting the message of Jesus have been successful in maintaining the Christian life of our congregations and have reached many new people. We praise and thank you that you are at work amongst us in so many ways.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen**

[Collect for the day](#)

**Gracious Father,
by the obedience of Jesus
you brought salvation to our wayward world:
draw us into harmony with your will,
that we may find all things restored in him,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

[The Lord's Prayer](#)

**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**

The Peace

At this point, we would normally share God's peace with each other. We cannot do that physically but please spend a few minutes now praying for specific people at St. Mary's...

Song: Guide me oh Though Great Jehovah

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Guide+me+o+though+great+jehovah+Hymn+Lyrics&&view=detail&mid=0F50E4A30868591DF98F0F50E4A30868591DF98F&&FORM=VDRVRV>

**Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more.**

**Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.**

**When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.**

The Blessing

**The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us
and give us peace**

Go in peace to love
and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ,
Amen.