

Fleet and Beacon Hill

United Reformed Churches



Virtual Worship 10.00 am
Sunday 24th May – Ascension Day/Thy Kingdom Come
Conducted by Revd Ruth Dillon

Call to Worship *Psalm 47*

Leader Jesus, Son of God, who was lifted into heaven,

All we worship you with great joy.

Leader Jesus, Son of God, raised far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come,

All we worship you with great joy.

Leader Jesus, Son of God, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and whose kingship is one that shall never be destroyed,

All we worship you with great joy

Sing or say together

Halle! Halle! Hallelujah

Halle! Halle! Hallelujah

Halle! Halle! Hallelujah

Halle! Halle! Hallelujah

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Lord's Prayer

God of glory and love and power and possibility,
we celebrate with you the work of Jesus,
his humility and care, his love for the truth,
his commitment to your plan up to and through and beyond his death,
his achievement in reconciling the world to you.
We celebrate his homecoming with you and with all the angels of heaven.
We bend our knees in awe, and we lift up our hearts and our hands in worship.

Forgive the lack of worship in our lives.
We are grumpy and self-centred.
We refuse to lift up our eyes to see you,
and to open our ears and hear your wonderful commission,
and so our lives fail to speak of you and to serve you.
Today, your day of glory, draw us to yourself.
Accept and heal and empower us.

Lord, by your grace we are healed, restored and forgiven.
Draw us into your life and your work
so that we may draw others, too,
to love and praise and live for you.
You say to each of us, '*your sins are truly forgiven*'; but you also say, '*Come and follow me*'.

The Lord's prayer

Hymn

*Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to His name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
He is the King of creation. *Refrain.*

Spread the good news o'er all the earth.
Jesus has died and has risen. *Refrain.*

We have been crucified with Christ.
Now we shall live forever. *Refrain.*

Come, let us praise the living God,
Joyfully sing to our Saviour. *Refrain.*

Reading

Daniel 7:9-14, read by Robert Mitchell (Beacon Hill URC)
Luke 24:44-53, read by Bridget Mitchell (Beacon Hill URC)

Reflection

Ascension Day was celebrated four days ago on 21st May. It is the day Jesus has been finally waiting for; he returns to his home to experience the glory that belongs to him. It is cause for the wildest of celebrations, yet in the disciples I always sense an element of abandonment when I read the Ascension stories. Yes, they were surprised, and even

amazed, that Jesus was no longer physically with them. However in our worship and discipleship we recognise that Jesus has not left us, but that we are merged, connected and united with him in his Glory. Our worship today is a faint echo of the welcome Jesus receives in heaven on his return. On Ascension Day in particular, *we can let rip with the praise*. Let the focus be not on our needs and wants, but on Jesus. It's his day!

We have a real tendency to try and work out what actually happened on that fateful mountain. I would suggest, let's not get stuck on worrying about 'what actually happened'. Remember, this is an important story for Luke – and he uses it as a *pivot*, both to close his Gospel and to begin the story of Acts. Yes, Luke describes the Ascension Story twice; firstly at the end of the Gospel of Luke, and then at the beginning of Acts. He wants us to be clear that the work of the bodily, tangible Jesus is complete and the work of the Church is just beginning.

In recent weeks we have left the familiarity of our buildings and we do not know when we will return; however the call of Jesus is still just as strong today as it was when the disciples of Jesus witnessed his Ascension. Jesus *commissions the disciples* - and today that is us - to continue to be his witnesses and spread and share the Gospel in whatever way we can. I expect that Jesus would have used social media to get his point across, platforms like Facebook Live, YouTube, Zoom, dial-a-sermon, to name but a few, beginning there, and then moving out 'to the ends of the earth'. That commission is ours, too. Today, do not feel it as a burden, that we are not meeting in our church buildings, but receive it as an incredible privilege and opportunity that God has given us.

Thy Kingdom Come, the annual ecumenical opportunity to pray together, started on Ascension Day (Thursday May 21st) and will finish on Pentecost (Sunday May 31st). If you have not done so already, please join with me on Facebook Live each day at 2 pm for 15 mins of Prayer and Reflection regarding our call and the commission that God has given us. This year we are paying particular attention to Mental Health issues, in these difficult times.

My prayer for you this day, is that you will recognise that call within you, and respond, to encourage friend or stranger, whether near or far, people with faith or people who are searching, those who are young or mature in years, regardless of sexuality, ability, and mobility. So let us bind ourselves to the Risen ascended Christ, so we may bathe in the unity of God who is the Creator of all that is, and with the Spirit who opens up our hearts and minds to the possibilities that are before us and also beyond our sight.

Prayers of Intercession

As you leave the world, Lord Jesus, you continue to care for it.

You have made us your witnesses,

so bless your Church throughout the world,

that your disciples everywhere may be continually telling the Good News, by word and action.

- We pray especially for churches and religious organizations throughout the world, spreading your gospel of love and justice in new ways.

Bless our communities and let your kingdom come.

- We bring to you people and situations in need of healing and reconciliation. We thank you for those who are working for justice and peace in our area, and ask that we, your commissioned witnesses, may work both with them and with you for the good of all.

Bless the whole world and let your kingdom come.

- We pray for the world's troubled areas and for places where people don't have the basic necessities of life.

We cry out to you against the things that threaten life on this planet.

Bless your people and let your kingdom come

You send us to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth, so activate us to be involved and let what we do and say be a blessing for your creation.

Amen.

Closing prayer and blessing

May we as Christ's Church be enlightened
Not for our sake,
but so we can better understand our calling.

May we as Christ's Church be equipped
not for our own glory,
But so we can better fulfil our potential.

And may we as Christ's church be empowered
Not for our own protection and preservation,
but so we can better risk doing the will of the one
who is both our head and our source of completeness.

Sing or say together

Halle! Halle! Hallelujah
Halle! Halle! Hallelujah
Halle! Halle! Hallelujah
Halle! Halle! Hallelujah