



**Broomhill Hyndland
Parish Church**

“Lighting the Way”

for **Sunday 16 May 2021**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another service.

Can I thank all those who helped us mark the beginning of Christian Aid Week and their 75th celebrations last Sunday. It was quite a full service with videos from Kenya, to the Christian Aid Leader, Revd Sally Foster-Fulton; also participation from other members of our own congregation and help with the organisation and structure of the service.

As I said last Sunday, and say again, many thanks to our participants in the Christian Aid Committee, for keeping the work in the forefront of our minds. Our service was to be streamed but we had internet connection problems. However it was still available by the link via YouTube, so thanks to Amanda and Gary for their efforts.

This Sunday, at the close of worship, we are making another step forward and are having fellowship at the close of the service. This will be done with you remaining in your seat, but at last a chance to have a cuppa, this time in the Sanctuary, and a time to spend together (socially distanced) at the close of our worship time.

Communion in June is approaching and, with the approval of the Kirk Session the return of the Sacrament in Naseby, but those who attend must remember to bring their own bread! As the numbers attending increase and with the hope of more relaxation in the rules, the Kirk Session may also be recommending the end of our Zoom services by the end of May. There will be other opportunities to use this technology but our priority has been to return to worship in a fuller way, whilst learning from our experiences over the past 15 months - adaptability is also the key because we have touched people in different ways and must be more aware of the different approaches to being the church other than the standard traditional ones.

***Bookings for 23 May are open next Friday from 10am until 3pm.
Telephone 07851 591 503.***

Sunday 16 May- Easter 7 (Year B)

For those who like to follow all the lectionary readings for the Sunday and dip into the Old Testament and Epistles, the readings for this Sunday are: Acts 1: 1-11; Daniel 7: 9-14; Psalm 47; Ephesians 1: 15-23 ; Luke 24: 44-53.

For those who miss the hymns I have added them in here: 448 Shine, Jesus shine; 446 Lift up your hearts, believers; CH3 449 Looking upward every day; 441 Blessing and honour.

You'll find in the Zoom services the words on the screen – in the safety of your own home, sing along!

Our Sunday reflection will be based on Acts 1 but please read and ponder the suggested Scripture and see how it connects and what it says to you.

Rest in His arms read, reflect, rejoice...

CALL

O God, you withdraw from our sight
that you may be known by our love.
Help us enter the cloud where you are hidden,
and surrender all our certainty to the darkness of faith in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND LORD'S PRAYER

Almighty God,
we come today reminded of your greatness and glory,
your sovereign power and eternal purpose
all expressed so wonderfully in Jesus Christ, our Lord:
Risen and Ascended.

We thank you for the wonder of Ascension,
that marvellous yet mysterious moment in the life of the Apostles
which left them gazing heavenwards in confusion yet departing in joy.

For the way that it brought the earthly ministry of Jesus
to a fitting conclusion signifying his oneness with you,
and demonstrating your final seal of approval on all that he had done
we thank you.

Through his Ascension Jesus is now set free to be Lord of all:
no longer bound to a particular place or time,
but with us always - able to reach even to the ends of the earth.
We thank you that through his departing Jesus prepared for his coming again:
through his Spirit, his Church, and his coming again in glory.

Gracious God,
forgive us for so often failing to grasp the wonder of Ascension,
for living each day as though it had never been.
Forgive the smallness of our vision, the narrowness of our outlook,
the weakness of our love, the nervousness of our witness,
our repeated failure to recognize the fullness of your revelation in Christ.
Give us a deeper sense of wonder, a stronger faith,
and a greater understanding of all you have done.

Father God,
like the Apostles we too will never fully understand all Ascension means.
We accept, but we do not fully understand.
We believe, yet we have many questions.
Help us, despite our uncertainty, to hold firm to the great truth
that the wonder of Christ Jesus goes far beyond anything we can ever imagine,
and in that faith may we live each day to his glory and honour.

(The Lord's Prayer - together we say...)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever. AMEN

Let us turn to God's Word, found in Acts 1: 1-11

'This is the Word of God. Thanks be to Him.'

And now a hymn. Choose one from our opening page...



PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Open our eyes to see the presence of you Lord God all around us, in the stillness of this sacred space, in the busy-ness of our streets, in the joy and celebrations of our lives, in tragedies and struggles that break our hearts. In your Word. AMEN

REFLECTION

About 10 years ago, the Manse household decided to have a night out and go to the Flicks? (Who calls it 'the Flicks' anymore?). The film we had chosen was not a blockbuster movie, a Star Wars film, or even a James Bond, it was the computer-animated (I call it a 'cartoon'), called, 'Up.'

The film centres around an elderly widower named Carl Fredricksen. Carl, when younger, meets a girl named Ellie who is a bit of an adventurer and wants to follow in the footsteps of the great explorer Charles Muntz. Carl and Ellie marry and, unable to have children of their own, decide to save up money to head where Muntz had gone, to Paradise Falls.

But every time they save, life takes a down turn and the money put away has to be spent on more urgent needs. Now elderly, and having saved the money, Ellie falls ill and dies. However, Carl resolves to keep his promise and go to Paradise Falls, turning his house into a makeshift airship using thousands of helium balloons and flying away.

It is difficult to understand the story from the Acts of the Apostles which describes Jesus' ascension to heaven, 40 days after Easter, but my eyes were drawn back to the line which describes men, dressed in white, addressing the disciples,

'Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky?'

'Why are you standing looking up?'

For the film, a film we all enjoyed and one that I didn't nod off at, the key for balloon-salesman Carl was that he followed the wishes of the wife he loved and lost. So much so, he does get to Paradise Falls and finds the explorer Muntz and the rare bird that he has been searching for.

Ascension is an ending for the disciples. It is the last time they will see Jesus. After a number of post-resurrection experiences, this is the day and the time

that Jesus departs and leaves the apostles on their own. We normally call Pentecost, which is next Sunday, the birth of the Church, when they are filled with the Holy Spirit but it is at Ascension that the disciples have to let go and take on board the final instructions of Jesus. I suppose, however it happened, they were stunned into silence and despite what Jesus told them, they were grieving too.

'Why are you standing there, looking up?'

It is an ending but also a beginning.

Now, they had not only to carry on with their lives but carry out the wishes and the witness of Jesus into the world. Yes, they had to wait for the Spirit which would come with wind and fire but standing around looking up, in a daze (is that how you spell it ?) and a daze was not the answer. The book of Acts is addressed to Theophilus which means 'lover of God.' The book is written so that we, lovers of God, can believe, have faith and also carry out the mission and witness.

If you like,

I am Theophilus,

you are Theophilus,

we are Theophilus, the book of Acts is written for us, the story of Ascension and Pentecost are written for us, we are part of the story because we love God and though we cannot see Jesus, as the disciples did, at least for a short time, the message for them is the message for us, to be filled with Spirit which will lead us out.

On Tuesday night Presbytery said their 'goodbyes' to the Revd Douglas Nicol who retired from his charge in Priesthill Nitshill St Christopher's. (Another church that can't decide on a name!!). Douglas gave his valedictory speech and some of his congregation spoke also.

It was an end but also a beginning – as Douglas up and leaves, his congregation will continue the good work done, guided by the Holy Spirit. What they cannot afford to do is to 'stand still looking up at the sky.' Neither can we for that matter, when the Presbytery tells us that of the likelihood of moving from 133 to 84 ministerial posts.

We cannot 'stand looking up at the sky' awaiting for divine inspiration when we know that our task, our fundamental role, has always been to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God far and wide.

The Ascension story is about the joy the disciples felt about the ongoing ever so real presence of Jesus after his death. The God they saw in Jesus they found in themselves. In Jesus' departure they discovered that they could love as wastefully as he did. They could live abundantly as Jesus did. They could heal and reconcile just as Jesus did. With Jesus pointing the way they had found God and while Jesus was gone, the God that Jesus pointed to was everywhere, even in them.

So 'why look up?'

You know, last week as we celebrated Christian Aid and 75 years of excellent work, one of the key words in this charity is 'empowerment', giving other communities the opportunities to use their skills – not to do it for them but to liberate them.

The Divine steps aside to let the Church step forward and take on its own responsibilities. It is like the parent who steps out of the way to allow the teenager freedom. On Ascension Day we don't have a God that never lets us grow up. We

don't have Jesus telling the disciples how to build a church – he has already guided them and showed them in the life he led. That dance between our responsibility and divine support is the dance between Ascension Day, where we are on our own to complete the work that must be done, and Pentecost, the promise of that backing; that support in that work.

There is something of that in the story here too – a God who has sent his Son, taught and healed, now liberating us, freeing us, to do the same: leaving us not to be dependent on God but to work with him, using the gifts that he has given us; leaving behind even a localised God, returning to a God that is everywhere.

We 'stand up and look up' and sometimes say that God is here when God is there and there and over there – whilst stunned by the departing of Jesus, hurt by the loss, wishing that he would return and that the Kingdom was near, the disciples would realise that God was not just the God of Israel but the God of Jew and Gentile.

This is what Jesus had taught them – God did not just belong to a chosen few, not just to a tribe, a nation or a country but a God for all.

Like the old story of the shipwreck and the man who refuses to take help saying 'God will save me', we make the mistake when we expect God to intervene, when, like the disciples, he has trusted you and I to get on with the job.

I think we skip over that feeling of absence and can often rush to celebrate Pentecost, that support, that feeling and spirit of divine presence which is so important to us. But you need Ascension Day to have it happen. Just like you need Lent for Easter to happen, Advent for Christmas, preparation for consummation.

Ascension is about movement, growth, maturity and an adult faith.

Don't stand and look up to the sky.

Don't stand waiting for things to happen.

Stop looking up.

The Spirit will come. The Spirit comes.

Now, we need to grow up rather than look up.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Holy God of Heaven and Earth:

as we remember Christ's ascension this very morning,
we pray that we might not be found looking to heaven for his return,
but into the faces of those who walk the earth with us.

May we see Christ in the face of the stranger, the outcast, the oppressed,
the unloved, and the unlovely.

May the gifts we give this morning empower your church to make room
at Christ's table for all those and more, your beloved children, whom we might
embrace in love, and in doing so, find ourselves in your embrace.

In the name of your blessed Son, we pray. AMEN

PRAYER POINTS

Conflict between Israel and Gaza; Covid; India and Nepal;

The work of Christian Aid this week; Mental Health Awareness Week;

The approaching General Assembly.

Razvan, and the death and funeral of his mother in Romania.

Margaret Paterson, formerly of Partickhill Road, who died on May 2nd.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Why do we look up, Lord, even though we know of Jacob's ladder,
Elijah's chariot, the new Jerusalem 'coming down'?

Is it because Jesus raised his eyes to heaven to pray,
or because he looked up to his Father?

Why do we look up, when we know of your omnipotence and omnipresence
in the detail of a daisy and the immensity of the galaxy?

Wherever you are, Lord, (are there places that you are not?),

help us not fall into the same trap as the disciples

and need the angels to say to us, 'Why are you looking up?'

For the kingdom of heaven is not so much 'up there', 'sky high'

but an estate in which Christ is King of every wind of change

and of every heart's cry.

And as we pray for the world, the troubled spots,

the heartaches and hell that many live through

(if they are lucky)

we believe that everywhere Christ's will is done,

on earth as it is in heaven,

the kingdom is around and within,

closer than breathing.

So Lord,

stop us standing still,

and help us to look to you,

look towards what is possible,

look inside,

and let the Spirit move us on.

SENDING HYMN

BENEDICTION

May every mystery you meet point towards God's love for you;

may every snap of the fingers direct you towards God's presence;

may the whole earth reveal the creases of God's hand holding you;

and an ascended Christ find you hand in hand with the poor.

Go in Peace...

... and may the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with
you all.

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