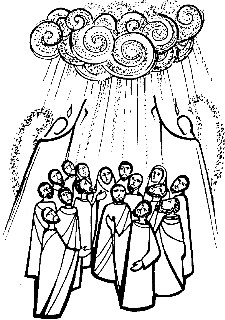
**ASCENSION DAY LITURGY**

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

A*ll* **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

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

be with you

*All* **and also with you.**

**Introduction**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for forty days we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, his bursting from the tomb

and his defeat of the power of sin and death. He appeared to his disciples many times and told them about the kingdom of God.

Today we recall how he left this earth and returned to his Father, ascending into

heaven to take his throne over all dominions and power. Trusting in his reign

over all creation, and submitting to his kingly yet loving rule, let us hear the story

of his parting.

**Acts 1: 4-11 read** by Amanda

**Reflections from Revd Veronica Wilson**

I have always found the Ascension story a bit of a paradox, Jesus who died and came back to life again, had to go back to heaven again so he could be with us always...he had to go, so he could come, he had to be absent for him to be present! He had to leave so the Holy Spirit could come**!**

I also wonder how the disciples were coping on the emotional roller coaster that were on. In less time than we have been in lockdown, Jesus, had been crucified, died, come back to life, appeared to them in a locked room, cooked them breakfast, taught them, challenged them, broken bread and wine with them, and now he was disappearing into the skies, when they had just got used to him being back, and the new normal.

I wonder how many times that the disciples had thought that it was the end of all they had pinned their hopes and dreams on, all they had given their lives for, all they had believed.

The ascension story is one of those moment, as his disciples watched Jesus being taken up into heaven, but it is not the end of the story.

The cross is not the end of the story

The empty tomb is not the end of the story

The upper room is not the end of the story

The ascension is not the end of the story

Ascension Day is a festival which invites mixed feelings. It marks a final farewell after forty days of disturbing yet life-giving encounters between the risen Christ and those who followed him most closely and who were most affected by his death. It marks also the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the point when Jesus' frightened, bewildered disciples were given new strength and power, and Jesus' promise that 'anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. They will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.' (John 14.12)

Ascension Day feels like the end of a story – a goodbye – and it is right and good for us to engage for a moment in that sense of loss, but we need also to understand that the story didn't end there – in fact, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit – even in this unprecedented time for us here and now in 2020, the story is far from over …

God is with us, working with and through us, his story and our story continue, and we must continue to tell his and our story, tell the good news of God with us, and at the same time like those first disciples had to wait for the Holy Spirt to come to empower them for the next part of the story, we too need to wait to see what the next part of our story is. Knowing that as we tell God’s story and as we wait for the next bit to be revealed that God is with us, and always will be.

**Sonnet by Malcolm Guite: read by Ren**

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory  
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place  
As earth became a part of Heaven’s story  
And heaven opened to his human face.  
We saw him go and yet we were not parted  
He took us with him to the heart of things  
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted  
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,  
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,  
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,  
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness  
And sing the waning darkness into light,  
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,  
Which all creation waits to see revealed **.**

**HYMN :** Faithful one sung by Terry

Faithful one, so unchanging  
Ageless one, You're my rock of peace  
Lord of all I depend on You  
I call out to You  
Again and again  
I call out to You  
Again and again  
  
You are my rock in times of trouble  
You lift me up when I fall down  
All through the storm, Your love is  
The anchor, My hope is in You alone

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to the disciples,  
he was taken up into heaven  
and he sat at the right hand of God.

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere,  
and the Lord worked with them  
and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.  
*Mark 16.19-20*

Go in peace: tell the good news everywhere (use words if you must).  
Work with your Lord, Jesus the Christ, continue his and your story,

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and those you love now and always.

*All* **Amen.**