

REFLECTIONS

In my ministerial experience, church attendance is often low on Ascension Day. We don't seem to get the Ascension quite like we get Christmas, Easter or Pentecost – how many 'Happy Ascension' cards have you seen in the shops? Perhaps we are uncomfortable with an account that suggests heaven is up in the sky, beyond the clouds, somewhere past Pluto? Or, more likely, we are not sure what the Ascension really means.

Jesus' earthly ministry focussed on teaching and demonstrating the presence of the Kingdom of God, that is, the rule of God, and how it had come near us in him. Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension convinced his disciples of the truth of his teaching, and gave the deepest significance to words in his prayer to the Father: 'you have given [me] authority over all people' (John 17.2). 'Jesus is Lord' became the first credal statement for Christians and launched the Church on its mission. At his ascension Jesus tells his apostles: 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1.7,8) Their task, and now ours, is to announce the sovereign rule of Jesus in the whole world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Going deeper

Vicars are sometimes accused of being too heavenly minded to be any earthly use! We must all guard against failing to connect our faith with the world around us. The Ascension calls us all to be actively engaged in living out Christ's commands to work for justice; to reject fear, hatred and distortion of the truth; to build loving, supportive communities; and to try to live at peace with all our neighbours – and thus demonstrate the rule of God in our lives.

This immense task should not, and cannot, be attempted alone. For the apostles the sight of their master finally departing for heaven must have been a bereavement, yet on returning to Jerusalem they joined with others in devoting themselves to prayer and awaiting the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. As Augustine (4th century) remarked: *You ascended from before our eyes, and we turned back grieving, only to find you in our hearts.*

I wonder...

In a week when our churches focus on the 'Thy Kingdom come' project, how shall I demonstrate his Kingdom within me?

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
Preacher: Caroline Curren

10.00am Zoom Holy Communion President: John Saxon

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan

Tuesday - Live

5.00pm Zoom Evening Prayer Leader: Rufus Barnes

Wednesday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion Caroline Curren Alex Jeewan

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 25th	Morning Psalm 93 & Luke 7:36-end Evening Psalm 18
Tue 26th	Morning Psalm 99 & Luke 8:1-15 Evening Psalm 68 & 1 John 3:1-10
Wed 27th	Morning Psalm 29 & Luke 8:16-25 Evening Psalm 46
Thurs 28th	Morning Psalm 24 & Luke 8:26-39 Evening Psalm 139
Fri 29th	Morning Psalm 28 & Luke 8:40-end Evening Psalm 147
Sat 30th	Morning Psalm 43 & Luke 9:1-17 Evening Psalm 48

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH,
DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Seventh Sunday of Easter 24th May 2020

Collect

O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Acts 1.6-14

When the apostles had come together, they asked Jesus, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Gospel: John 17.1-11

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.'

See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.

Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In May please pray for:
Sewards End & Little Walden C of E, Radwinter Primary School

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Kenneth Mark, John Bartram

EVENTS

THY KINGDOM COME May 21st - May 31st 2020 Join the global wave of prayer calling all Christians to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for more people to come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ. We have a Prayer Space for Families and Prayer Spaces for All Ages on our website 'Thy Kingdom Come' page. A booklet 'Praying the Lord's Prayer with the Sonnets of Malcolm Guite' is downloadable from the website or can be posted to you (telephone the Parish Office for a copy).

THE REVEREND JOHN SAXON has been appointed Team Vicar with responsibility for Debden and Wimbish. His licensing will take place via Zoom on **Tuesday 2nd June** at 5.30pm.
Ursula Lyons

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Scott Kelly holds the record for the longest, non-stop stay of a US astronaut on the International Space Station – 340 days. That's almost a whole year of going without family hugs, hardly ever going outside, and having to endure social distancing set at 435km. Not only that, but when he started out he had no clear idea when it would end or how he'd get through it. Does that all sound rather familiar? When interviewed afterwards he spoke of the things that helped him survive. Apart from living in the moment by focussing on the job at hand, he also spoke of looking both to the past and to the future. Savouring cherished memories, whilst also thinking about what he hoped to achieve by his trip's end - these helped him find the strength and resilience he needed.

We may feel, like an astronaut, that we have left the familiar far behind and are now facing a most uncertain future. Old certainties are being shaken and new ones are untried: is it safe to relax the lockdown, will the children be safe returning to school? For the Christian there always remain three unshakeable truths: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. At every service of Holy Communion we act out these certainties as we look back into the past, giving thanks for what Christ has done for us; we recognise his presence with us now; and we look ahead to a promised future together around the Lord's table in his Kingdom. This three-dimensional shape to every Christian's experience can give us the hope we need to see us through.

In E. M. Forster's novel *Howard's End* there is a description of how one character faces death: 'as the seafarer who can greet with an equal eye the deep that he is entering, and the shore that he must leave'. We are very familiar with the shoreline and tides of our own lives pre-coronavirus, but for each of us the future looks as unknowable as the ocean deep. We can face both with an equal eye when we recognise Christ's presence with us in our tiny boat.

With love and prayers,
Andy Colebrooke

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord Jesus, be the Ascended One in my heart, where my biggest struggle lies. Be my Lord at home and at work, and in my relationships with your world. May I be able to say with joy: 'Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. Amen.

NEWS

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM AND THE PARISH OFFICE REMAIN CLOSED until further notice in accordance with national guidelines.

EMAIL BULLETINS We are issuing regular email bulletins that highlight information from the website, attach the Grapevine and service sheet and provide the Zoom links for live services that weekend. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssaffronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

WORSHIP ONLINE There are several ways of joining in our team worship which can be accessed from links on St Mary's Church at Home webpage.

<http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/churchathome>
You can watch a pre-recorded services via youtube and you can participate in live Zoom Services led from various locations in the team. The service sheets used for these services and Grapevine are also available on the webpage. If you would like technical help in setting up Zoom, please contact Gerald Gardner gerald.gardner@ntlworld.com or Steve Hasler s.hasler@btopenworld.com

ARE YOU LIVING WITH DEMENTIA or supporting someone who is? Livability have provided a helpful guide: "Dementia Inclusive Church and COVID-19". If you would like a copy or just to have chat, do contact me. *Judith Hasler* 01799 525041.

THE TRANSITION PROJECT Self-help and support, CV writing and improving, interview practice, job search, discussion. Tuesday clinic is cancelled but on line support continues – *contact us at* www.transitionproject.co.uk

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



MINISTRY TEAM

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