

WORSHIP FOR ASCENSION DAY 2020

Lighting of the Candle

*On Easter Sunday I lit the Easter Candle and used these words.
Light a candle if you can, and use these words:*

Christ yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega,
all time belongs to him, and all ages;
to him be glory and power,
through every age and for ever. Amen.

This has been an Easter Season the like of which we have never known. Now we come to Ascension Day, when we should be gathering at St Matthew's for a Celebration. Offer to God our frustrations, our anger, our fear, our concerns about our friends, our concerns for the future. Offer them to God - and ask him to grant us Peace. This is a setting of Psalm 130 from The Requiem by John Rutter. Here it is sung by Bow Valley Chorus with Nigel Boehm on the cello.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0SLdbcQNLl>



Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord * Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well * the voice of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss * O Lord, who may abide it?
For there is mercy with thee * therefore shalt thou be feared.
I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him * in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord * before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy * and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel * from all his sins.

Confession - *we make our confession to God, and are assured of his forgiveness*

Christ died to sin once for all, and now he lives to God.
I/we renew my/our resolve to have done with all that is evil and confess my/our sins in penitence and faith.

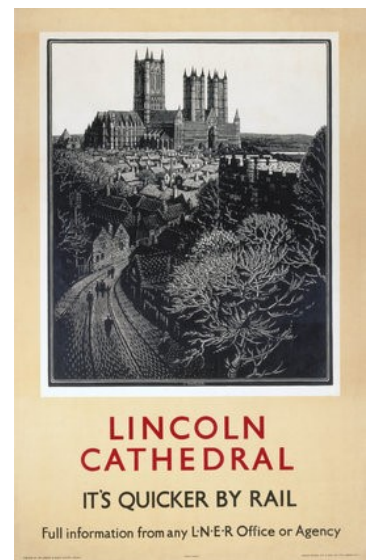
Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
I/we have sinned against you and against my/our neighbour in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness, through my/our own deliberate fault.
I/We are truly sorry and repent of all my/our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive me/us all that is past and grant that I/we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon me/us
pardon and deliver me/us from all my/our sins,
confirm and strengthen me/us in all goodness,
and keep me/us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ascension Day hymn - Hail, the day that sees him rise -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqAqeLTfegA>

*This recording is the choir of Lincoln Cathedral singing on the roof of the Cathedral.
(Imagine the safeguarding paperwork to get all the children up there!). You can see the
Theological College where I trained - it is the building with the octagonal tower seen 20
seconds in.*



Say the psalm set for Ascension Day - Psalm 47 - and pray the prayer

Clap your hands together, all you peoples; * O sing to God with shouts of joy.
For the Lord Most High is to be feared; * he is the great King over all the earth.
He subdued the peoples under us * and the nations under our feet.
He has chosen our heritage for us * the pride of Jacob, whom he loves.
God has gone up with a merry noise, * the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.
O sing praises to God, sing praises; * sing praises to our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth; * sing praises with all your skill.
God reigns over the nations; * God has taken his seat upon his holy throne.
The nobles of the peoples are gathered together * with the people of the God of Abraham.
For the powers of the earth belong to God * and he is very highly exalted.

O sing praises to God, sing praises.
As Christ was raised by your glory, O Father,
so may I/we be raised to new life
and rejoice to be called your child/children,
both now and for ever. Amen.

Bible reading - Acts 1.1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

So when they had come together, they asked him, '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.'

Address - our thanks to Clive for producing some thoughts, they are on the front page of the church website.

The Nicene Creed - we affirm our faith, and the faith of the whole church (hence 'we' not 'I')

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Anthem - God is gone up with a triumphant shout,
words Edward Taylor, circa 1646-1729, music: Gerald Finzi, 1901-1956
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84mrFdSJZi0> - sung by Stanford Chamber Chorale

Gerald Finzi was born in 1901 and was part of that generation of composers who came to maturity in the middle of the 20th century. His compositions are often bitter-sweet; there is always an awareness of the transience of life. This is the key to understanding his music. He died in 1956 aged only 55 - his fear that his life would not be long enough to say all that he had wanted to say was proved to be correct.

God is gone up with a triumphant shout:	Methinks I see Heaven's sparkling courtiers fly,
The Lord with sounding Trumpets' melodies:	In flakes of Glory down him to attend,
Sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praises out,	And hear Heart-cramping notes of Melody
Unto our King sing praise seraphicwise!	Surround his Chariot as it did ascend;
Lift up your Heads, ye lasting Doors, they sing,	Mixing their Music, making ev'ry string
And let the King of Glory enter in.	More to enravish as they this tune sing.

Extinguish your candle and watch the smoke - perhaps this is the best picture of the Ascension. Alternatively, we could use a modern image: I am sitting in my garden, typing this on my laptop, using my wireless network to link in with the world wide web. How different lock down would have been even a decade ago.

Prayers of Intercession - these are from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin, Ireland. I have amended them slightly. You are welcome to do the same.

Loving and healing God, we turn to you in prayer, confident that you are with us and with all people in every moment. As we lift our eyes to the heavens, we pray for our world. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We stand before you as people of hope, trusting in your care and protection. May your faithful love support us and soothe the anxiety of our hearts. We pray for our churches, for Libby our Bishop, for the life of our Deanery and parishes, for all our friends and fellow-worshippers. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Generous God, fill us with compassion and concern for others, young and old, that we may look after one another in these challenging days. Bring healing to those who are sick with the virus and be with their families. Be with all who are afraid, in hospitals - remembering especially John Colman - residential care, or in their own homes. Many do not have the luxury of nice homes and beautiful gardens. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

May those who have died rest in your eternal embrace. From our own parishes we remember Peter Statham, Ruth Barkway, Colin Green, Mollie Hipkin and Robert Allez. Comfort their family and friends, and all who mourn. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Strengthen and protect all medical professionals caring for the sick and all who work in our medical facilities. Give wisdom to leaders in healthcare and governance that they may make the right decisions for the well-being of people. We pray in gratitude for all those who have continued to work in so many fields of life for the sake of us all. We ask for wisdom as we seek to restart and rebuild. We pray for those for whom the future is so unclear - in our City we pray especially for those at Rolls Royce, we pray for the businesses and economic life of our parishes. Today the children from Walter Evans school would have come and worshipped - we pray for all our young people, and ask your blessing upon them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God of creation and life, we place ourselves in your protection. May the mantle of your peace enfold us this day and tomorrow. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The Ascension Day Collect

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens,
so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell;
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOL-YWWpEXk> looks like a "Songs of Praise" hymn

How shall I sing that majesty
Which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie;
Sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around
Thy throne, O God most high;
Ten thousand times ten thousand sound
Thy praise; but who am I?

Thy brightness unto them appears,
Whilst I thy footsteps trace;
A sound of God comes to thy ears,
But they behold thy face.
I shall, I fear, be dark and cold,
With all my fire and light;
Yet when thou dost accept their gold,
Lord, treasure up my mite.

Enlighten with faith's love my heart,
Inflame it with love's fire,
Then shall I sing and take my part
With that celestial choir.
They sing, because thou art their sun;
Lord, send a beam on me;
For where heaven is but once begun
There alleluias be.

How great a being, Lord, is thine,
Which doth all beings keep!
Thy knowledge is the only line
To sound so vast a deep.
Thou art a sea without a shore,
A sun without a sphere;
Thy time is now and evermore,
Thy place is everywhere.



Words: John Mason, music: Coe Fen, Ken Naylor
Peter's favourite hymn. Coe Fen is the area beside the Cam where we used to play as children - grandad lived just across the road from it.
This tapestry of Christ in Majesty is in St Edmundsbury Cathedral - the original image is from the Bury Bible, a medieval manuscript produced in the Abbey of St Edmund.

Let me know if this service has been useful please - any comments to revpeterbarham@btinternet.com or 01332 551404

Peter Barham, 20 May 2020

Conclusion - words from 2 Timothy 2.11-13

Here are words you may trust.
Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead: he is our salvation, our eternal glory.
If we die with him, we shall live with him; if we endure, we shall reign with him.
If we deny him, he will deny us; if we are faithless, he keeps faith.
For he has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.