

These short acts of worship have been produced for you by Revd Jonathan Dean. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

### Call to Worship

O Lord open our lips:  
**and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords:  
**for God's steadfast love endures for ever.**

### Opening Hymn StF 293, All Heaven Declares

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here  
<https://youtu.be/kPkZAJA610k?si=LMBI9RNgl08nExgf>

All heaven declares  
the glory of the risen Lord;  
who can compare  
with the beauty of the Lord?  
For ever he will be  
the Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
and worship him alone.

I will proclaim  
the glory of the risen Lord,  
who once was slain  
to reconcile us to God.  
For ever you will be  
the Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
and worship you alone.

*Noël Richards (b. 1955) and Tricia Richards (b. 1960)*

### Prayer

Blessed are you, the God of our ancestors,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed is your holy and glorious name,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you, in your holy and glorious temple,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you who look into the depths,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you, enthroned on the cherubim,

worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you in the heights of heaven,  
worthy to be praised and exalted for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth,  
to you be glory and praise for ever.

From the darkness of death you have raised your Christ  
to the right hand of your majesty on high.

The pioneer of our faith, his passion accomplished,  
has opened for us the way to heaven  
and sends on us the promised Spirit.

May we be ready to follow the Way  
and so be brought to the glory of his presence  
where songs of triumph for ever sound:

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Reading Ephesians 1: 15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards  
all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for

you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our  
Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of  
wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the  
eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to  
which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious  
inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable  
greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working  
of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he  
raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the  
heavenly places, 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. And he has put all things under his feet  
and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is  
his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### Reading Luke 24: 44-53

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while  
I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of  
Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he  
opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to  
them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise  
from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and  
forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations,  
beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And

see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.' Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

### Reflection on the Reading

It may be that the story of the Ascension feels a bit 'clunky' to us. As a child, I was always fascinated by the very vivid image Luke gives of Jesus disappearing into the skies as the disciples look hopelessly upwards. There are some hilarious medieval stained glass depictions of the event, with Jesus's delicate white feet poking out of a fluffy white cloud.

But Luke tells us that the disciples knew that this was an event which brought joy, and hope, and somehow fulfilled the promise of Jesus's death and resurrection. They rushed backed into Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit, somehow knowing that was a moment for celebration, expectation and excitement. This wasn't like his death, when they thought that he'd been taken from them forever. This was different: although he'd disappeared into the heavens, he was still with them, and would *always* be with them. Just in a new way.

The Ascension marks a hinge moment in the Jesus story. The biblical accounts of whatever happened seem strange – but it's the disciples' reaction we should pay attention to. They're thrilled about it! It's the moment when Jesus 'stitches together' earth and heaven, the presence of God and the ongoing life of the world, in a new and irreversible way. From now on, rather as Jacob had seen in his vision all those years ago, heaven and earth were one. Jesus was, as our hymn says, no longer confined to one place and time – he's everywhere, risen, triumphant in love, and always ready to make his presence known in our lives. And, similarly, the life of earth and all our human experience, which Jesus shared – all our sadness and pain, all our failure and sin, as well as all our joy and achievement, are forever now also caught up into the very heart of God. We will never be alone again. And God in Jesus will always be closer to us than our very breath, seeking to bless us and give us new life and love.

That's a cause for joy. It's the bringing-to-completion of all that Jesus came to do. And it's the reality that should now define our life here on earth, as we journey closer towards the reality of heaven. The promise of Advent, of Emmanuel, the 'God who is with us', is now a reality. Alleluia!

The poet Malcolm Guite describes this reality in a beautiful sonnet:

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 StF 418, We have a gospel to proclaim**

*Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here*

<https://youtu.be/B2FX0-kS7wA?si=DeSeQoe3c2B034nW>

1 We have a gospel to proclaim,  
good news for all throughout the earth;  
the gospel of a Saviour's name:  
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

2 Tell of his birth at Bethlehem —  
not in a royal house or hall,  
but in a stable dark and dim,  
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

3 Tell of his death at Calvary:  
hated by those he came to save,  
in lonely suffering on the cross,  
for all he loved his life he gave.

4 Tell of that glorious Easter morn:  
empty the tomb, for he was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
that we might share his victory.

5 Tell of his reign at God's right hand,  
by all creation glorified.  
He sends his Spirit on his Church  
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

6 Now we rejoice to name him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel-message we proclaim:  
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Edward Joseph Burns (*b.* 1938)

**Prayers for God's World and Lord's Prayer**

Through Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us,  
let us pray to the Lord.

Lift up our hearts to the heavenly places  
and inspire us to serve you as a royal priesthood:  
**Lord, hear us.**

Let all peoples acknowledge your kingdom  
and grant on earth the blessing of peace:  
**Lord, hear us.**

Send down upon us the gift of the Spirit  
and renew your Church with power from on high:  
**Lord, hear us.**

May peace abound and righteousness flourish,  
that we may vanquish injustice and wrong:  
**Lord, hear us.**

Help us to proclaim the good news of salvation,  
and grant us the needful gifts of your grace:  
**Lord, hear us.**

Let us commend the world, for which Christ prays,  
to the mercy and protection of God. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins.  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation.  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

**Hymn StF 297, Christ is alive.**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here  
[https://youtu.be/LEtJvinD8\\_s?si=6nfYxdZkvl4mQbLi](https://youtu.be/LEtJvinD8_s?si=6nfYxdZkvl4mQbLi)

- 1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.
- 2 Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

3 In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.

4 Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

5 Christ is alive and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

*Brian Wren (b. 1936)*

**Blessing**

May Christ, who has opened the kingdom of heaven,  
bring us to reign with him in glory.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia!

Bible reading from New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Updated Edition, Copyright © 2021 by National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America  
Some material is taken and adapted from [rootsontheweb.com](http://rootsontheweb.com) and is copyright © ROOTS for Churches Ltd.