

Opening verse

Gather us O God, body, spirit, soul and mind

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Good morning everyone,
My name is Helen and I am your Liturgist for today.
We have been called from many places to worship our God.
To light the sacred fire of faith, so that we work think, work and speak for you.
Now with Ian, Dave, the musicians, and all who participate in worship,
we join our voices, stand as we bring in the Bible, and sing

Gathering Song – O thou who camest from above TIS572(i)

- 1. O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart.*
- 2. There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.*
- 3. Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up thy gift in me,*
- 4. ready for all thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.*

SONG: O thou who camest from above, by Charles Wesley,
from Together in Song, Harpers Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Acknowledgement of Country

During our worship during this Easter season, we are hearing recorded acknowledgments of country from all around Australia from places where our members live or travel. As we gather here on Wurundjeri Country and acknowledge the original custodians of this place, let us remember all the peoples of this land now called Australia.

Video: Joy and Tim Linton Yarrabah North Qld

Welcome and Introduction

We welcome you all to today's Service whether you are old friends or new to our congregation, in the room or at home watching the live stream, and we invite you to join us, after the Service, for Morning Tea in the hall. Today we will hear the readings for Ascension Day, from Acts and

Ephesians, and hear what that means for our world. God speaks to us, her people and we look out into the future, through a new relationship with our God Creator, Jesus Saviour and Holy Spirit Comforter.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Including Song: TIS185, Alleluia, alleluia

*Alleluia, alleluia. We praise you God, Creator Lord,
For the glory of your whole creation.*

God Creator.

You have placed our tiny blue ball in the infinity of stars and space,
and we are overwhelmed by the wonderful uniqueness of creation.
The beauty of our earth, the myriad shades of green in plants,
dusty orange of deserts, frozen white of the ice fields,
the liquid blue of oceans and rivers, gold of the sun and dark velvet of night.
Yet you are mindful of our small and insignificant lives and you sent us your Son.

You are the God of the Cosmos, and our Story.

*Alleluia, alleluia. We praise you, God, Incarnate Lord,
For the mystery of your word made flesh.*

We praise you Incarnate Lord.

You lived, breathed, and loved as we do, and with arms open wide on the cross,
you have created a place for us, a new covenant with us, in bread and wine.
You are the embodiment of God's Grace and love for the world.

*Alleluia, alleluia. We praise you God Comforter, Lord,
For the presence of your Holy Spirit.*

Holy Spirit, Comforter

Since the Ascension we have been living with this new Covenant.
Encouraged in our faith through your faithfulness.
We thank you that although we no longer see Jesus face to face,
his Spirit moves, breathes and walks with us.
God with us.

*Alleluia, alleluia We praise you God, The Three - in - One,
For the promise of your coming Kingdom*

Holy Three in One.

We know how undeserving we are of your new Covenant,
yet you created a place for us in your heart.
Forgive us when we wander away from you and ignore the suffering we see in the world.
Forgive us when we are complacent and close our minds
to those who are different, in race, colour, gender or religion.
When we don't care for our earth as we should,
and ignore the warnings our climate is giving us.
Forgive us for our lack of faith for following our own way, not yours,
and open us to this new relationship with you.

Open our eyes and hearts to love as you love.
Amen

Declaration of Forgiveness

Creator God, Jesus Saviour, Spirit Comforter.

With arms open wide You welcome us, we just have to reach out to you.

You have created a new Covenant for us through the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
and we know that our sin is forgiven.

Thanks be to God

Alleluia, alleluia.

Bible Reading – Acts 1:1-11

Peter Hornby

Dave to invite children to front. Bible as prompt. Contents page. Matthew Mark Luke John (four books on Jesus life). Next book: Acts. The actions, or activities of the disciples after Jesus died and was resurrected. Chapters, verses.. So, we are hearing the very next thing in the Bible after the stories of Jesus life.

Listen out for two things: The number of days mentioned in this reading, and what happens to Jesus...

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 during 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 toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward 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."

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Ok, how did we go? Did anyone catch the number of days mentioned? 40 – familiar – any other times 40 is mentioned? (Adults to chime in). [Link to Ash Wednesday.](#)

And what happens to Jesus? Lifted up in the clouds.

Show ancient Hebrew worldview [here](#). Childrens time image 1 (in Dropbox)

This was the Hebrew understanding of the world when Jesus was alive... what do you see.

And this is our understanding of the world, now – show clip, loaded in Dropbox Children's Time 2 clip.

Look at that – ascending and descending. Amazing knowledge we have of God’s glorious creation – of the cosmos – and our eyeballs!

So, the point of this story – of Jesus ascending to heaven... is that he doesn’t die again. Once he is raised from the tomb, he is alive forever, with God, and with us. No more death. Amen. Let’s sing hallelujah.

Song – Hallelujah

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah! Praise the Lord!
Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah! Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!
Praise the Lord!

Song: Youth Favorites, Singspiration Inc. Zondervan Publishing House, Michigan

Bible Reading – Ephesians 1:15-23

Meredith Budge

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward 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.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

Reflection

Ian

Healing the World through the Ascension of Christ

We’ve heard a weird and wonderful story told today. Jesus floats up into heaven, which at the time of telling is a physical place above the sky, and then two figures in white appear to make sense of it for us. I’ll talk about what those two figures say and do to make this a story which speaks across cosmologies, worldviews and ages of history in a moment. But first I want to introduce you to a book that a number of us in the congregation are reading and discussing together, a book which I will then relate to the story of Christ’s Ascension: **SLIDE** *Healing Haunted Histories* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers.

Healing Haunted Histories is written for settler peoples. It invites any of us who are not First Nations people to examine our stories about what brought us here, our movement or that of our ancestors across the world, and the ongoing impact of our settlement on the original inhabitants and on the land itself. The book posits that our histories are haunted, not only by the violent dispossession that formed modern colonial societies, but often by the traumatic events that led people to cross the world: things like imprisonment, persecution, war and disaster, poverty and unemployment. The haunting in our histories can come from our families’ places of origin as well as from what happened here when they arrived. Not all our families experienced or inflicted trauma, but we all live with the inheritance of what happened, the good and the bad, the fruitful

and the destructive, the peaceful and the violent. Many of our families, mine included, have built very privileged lives on the foundation of colonial dispossession. The book offers a process to examine and understand this history in order to heal and grow together in solidarity with Indigenous communities as part of a wider movement of decolonisation, a transformation of our way of being in the world for justice and healing.

We're not going to do all that work here this morning, but I do want to invite you into an initial conversation with your neighbours. Find one or two other people who you didn't come here with today and ask them: How do you come to be living where you live today? What were your movements or the movements of previous generations of your family? What kind of land did you or they come from? What language did you or they speak? What moved you or them to leave – was it a choice? Who was left behind?

Some of us here today are first generation refugees with very traumatic stories to tell. So please be sensitive, and only share as much as you are comfortable with. We are only going to spend a few short minutes on this so don't go into too much detail. We'll necessarily only scratch the surface today, but let's get oriented to the world crossing stories around us.

DISCUSSION

Here we are, from so many different places with so many different stories to tell. *Healing Haunted Histories* talks about the way our ancestral stories shape our lives and the world in which we live. In particular, the book discusses the inheritance of trauma. I'm not going to get you to talk about that today, but let's acknowledge the often-silent histories of suffering, often women's stories, which are also passed down through the generations. Those wounds underneath the flesh, the inner scarring, passed down by nature and nurture, in our bodies, our genes, and by family systems and social patterns. This is well documented in indigenous communities and among the descendants of holocaust survivors and other displaced peoples. In fact, are we seeing the inherited trauma of generations being enacted in Israel, Gaza and Palestine right now? That is one horrific example of the need to heal haunted histories, but there are plenty of others right here in this land now called Australia. And it is this aspect of our shared colonial history, the inherited trauma, the inner wounds in need of healing, that I am connecting to the story of Christ's ascension today.

Because the stories of scripture including the Ascension of Christ are also part of our inheritance. They are stories which for good or ill have also contributed to shaping the world we live in.

And today, from out of that inheritance, come two figures in white. They stand beside us as we gaze up into the sky where Jesus has just been hidden from us by a cosmic cloud. And they ask a corrective question: "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? Jesus will come as you saw him go." they say, "But for now, your eyes need to be fixed not on heaven, but on the earth, not on metaphysical speculation, but on worldly concerns – the things that Jesus himself embodied. Remember Jesus said, 'you are witnesses to my gospel of transforming grace, love, healing, justice and peace, you are witnesses from here to the ends of the earth, even as far as Brunswick Australia.' His going and his immanent gift of the Holy Spirit means that Jesus is no longer present just to you," say the two figures in white, "but to everyone in every place and time. His body, his physical presence in the world will now be your body, your community, wherever it goes in the world and wherever it does his healing work."

So, the two figures tell us what is going on with the Ascension of Jesus, but they show us as well. Who are they? Luke doesn't call them angels, just two figures in white, and as such, they might remind us of other similar appearances in the gospel of Luke. Two figures in dazzling clothes met us at the tomb on Easter morning with the women and asked a similar corrective question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" And we also saw two glowing figures appear in glory beside Jesus on the mountain of Transfiguration. There they were named, Moses and Elijah. Now I'm not saying that the two figures at the resurrection and ascension are therefore Moses and Elijah, Luke doesn't say that, but there is a clear allusion to

them. Moses and Elijah both have traditions attached to them which say they did not die but ascended directly into heaven. Each of them was covered by a metaphysical cloud during their time on Earth. And most importantly today, each of them handed on the “mantle” of their prophetic work, the “spirit” of their ministry if you like, to their followers, Moses to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha.

The presence of the two figures in white at the Ascension evokes this biblical tradition and says to us, “This is what is going on for you here today. Just like Joshua and Elisha from Moses and Elijah, you are about to inherit the Spirit of Jesus and thereby the continuation of his ministry and all that goes with it.”

Healing Haunted Histories puts a challenge to Christians. The authors say this healing work of decolonising our personal stories is necessary for us if indeed we are inheritors of the work of a Jesus who was executed by a colonial state. They point out that most of the biblical narrative emerged from histories of displacement, violence, and oppression. They quote scholar David Carr from his book *Holy Resilience: The Bible’s Traumatic Origins* saying: *The Scriptures “both of Judaism and of Christianity are a written deposit of centuries of suffering, and communal resilience.”*

So, Joshua inherits from Moses a story of slavery, infanticide and plague, of homeless refugees wandering for 40 years in an inhospitable desert. So, Elisha inherits from Elijah a story of political corruption, drought and persecution, of idolatry and unfaithfulness. And in both cases that inheritance of trauma also contains stories of resilience, hope, liberation and new life out of the death of what had been. Surely such is also the case for the followers of Christ? The trauma is not the final word. But it is the tomb from which rises and ascends the ongoing work of healing love.

So, followers of Christ, let us not stand gazing up into heaven. Jesus has not gone, he is coming in Spirit to continue his transforming, healing work in the body of the world. What might it look like for you, for us, to do that work with him?

Offering Song – Deeper River, AoV.2.6

*1. There’s a river running deep within the silence of our souls
where the quenching healing waters carve their art
at its source a spring of living water surging and sustained
It’s the voice of Jesus waiting for the listening of our hearts.*

*When the living waters flow in us
when the living waters flow again
they will carry us they will wash us down
they will quench our thirst again.*

*2. Sometimes the river of our life winds wandering away
sometimes the rapids tumble restlessly
comes the time to stop and find the deeper river running strong
to drink refreshing waters and hear the spirit’s song.*

*3. Hear the call to thirsty people there’s no need to thirst again
to the weary come beside still waters lie
full of goodness full of mercy our cup will overflow
when the call of that deep river is a voice we’ve come to know.*

SONG: Deeper River, © 1997 Digby Hannah, from As One Voice, Vol 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd.
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Prayers of the People

Tim Budge

My name is Tim and I will be leading Prayers of the People this morning. At the conclusion of the prayer, I will take the Christ candle to the chapel space at the back of the church and you are welcome to light a taper and make your own prayers after the service. At times during the prayer, I will pause for you to reflect, breathe and add the prayers of your heart. Let us pray.

Loving God, we remind ourselves of why we are here, as your people gathered today. We are here because we believe that your love is in the DNA of the universe and that from the largest galaxies to the smallest sub-atomic particles we see the wonder and the gifting of yourself in creation. We are here because we are called to be your people, to be your hands, feet, heart and body, to live out grace, forgiveness, hope, justice and peace. We are here because we are called by love and want to live out that love. We are here because we need to be refreshed and renewed.

So we thank you for the signs of your love and of your kingdom, the breaking in of grace and hope. We thank you for new life, for old friends, for fresh beginnings, for welcome surprises, for the sound of laughter and for friendly smiles. We thank you for those who remind us of when we need to let go and find new perspectives and approaches. We thank you for opportunities to be mindful, to stop and breathe, to look again at beauty around us, to listen to sounds of the rhythm of creation.

Help us to value these things, to protect them, nurture them and give out as we take in. Help us to practise a sense of presence in creation and in community.

We pray for those places and for people we know, where life is hard. Dear God, sometimes signs of your kingdom are missing or difficult to find and hope seems destroyed. We pray for people facing oppression, dispossession, discrimination or warfare. We pray especially for Palestine, Myanmar, Afghanistan, for Uighurs and others groups persecuted in China. We pray for countries struggling with inadequate and under-resourced health systems, facing the unequal burden of responding to Covid-19 and other diseases. May world leaders seek justice, equality and peace and move past self-interest and maintenance of privilege. May they have the courage and conviction to do what is right, beyond party politics and the status-quo. We bring to you places and people who are on our heart and we ask that your kingdom come and that justice might roll on like a river.

We think of those among us who are struggling with grief, loss, heartbreak, or just a burden of sorrow. May your presence be real to them. Help us to be aware and to share their pain, be open to suffering around us and to know how to respond. Somehow, may your love and peace be in our words and actions. May we know when to speak and when to be silent. Help us to weep with those who weep. And we think of those we know who need a special sense of God's presence.

Sometimes God, our calling to be your people, to follow you in the way of the cross is beyond us. However, we are here again, seeking your strength, your compassion and love. Renew in us, as individuals and as a church, a deeper sense of justice and a new commitment to peace and freedom. Help us to listen again to your call on our lives, to be reminded, as Frederick Buechner said, that "The place God calls us to is the place where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Help us again to look for that place, to sense both our gladness and the world's hunger. May we see you and join you there. Where is that place?

Loving God, we bring all of these prayers to you today, asking in your name, AMEN.

Notices

Helen

It is time now to share the news of our community. If you have something to tell us about please come forward and join the queue to my right. Remember to check our website and Facebook Group for details of all our news and events. We send out a weekly email bulletin – if you would like to receive it please give your address to Saide.

Sending Song – Sent out in Jesus Name, ATO 412

*Sent out in Jesus' name.
Our hands are ready now,
to make the world the place
in which the kingdom comes (repeat)*

*The angels cannot change
a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love
of justice and of peace.
The task is ours to do
to set it really free
O help us to obey
and carry out your will. (repeat)*

SONG: [Sent out in Jesus' name](#), Traditional Cuban, from [All Together Okay](#), Openbook Publishers, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Blessing and Sending

Ian

Go in peace to live with joy the life of justice and hope.

Let us bless one another with the words of the grace:

***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.***

In the name of Christ. **Amen**

Thank You

Liturgist:
Helen Burnham

Acknowledgement of
Country:
(recording)
Joy and Tim Winton

Bible readings:
Tim Budge
Peter Hornby

With the Children:
Dave Hall (CYA Pastor)
Ian Ferguson

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Meredith Budge

Flowers:
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Closing Verse

Send us out, O God, body, spirit, soul and mind