

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



Heaton Moor United Church
The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church
working together in partnership



Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 24th May

Circuit Service 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88663266160?pwd=RGtadm1idWRRS3QwQ1c2Y0tEanAxdz09>

Meeting ID: 886 6326 6160

Password: 960159

Tuesday 24th May

Circuit Prayer Meeting 7.00pm

Thy Kingdom Come

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88950229287?pwd=NHRMWmR4VklwdFI4OHZkMFd1TnpQdz09>

Meeting ID: 889 5022 9287

Password: 706389

Wednesday 27th May

Coffee and a Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Password 794265

Please use the normal telephone numbers if calling in.

Office Telephone number 07471 065729

Dear Heaton Moor United Church family,

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Liberator Jesus Christ.

Hope you are all doing well and are staying alert.

It will be two months since the official lock down, and I understand it should have been hard for so many people staying at home, missing to meet their dear ones, missing on hugs, missing fellowships and missing to be at church. I also need to appreciate the resilience of many people who have coped with the situation and continued talking to their neighbours and friends through social media resources. Now the discussions have begun preparing for the return to work places, and eventually to church buildings as well at an appropriate time.

Thank you for your support and encouragement to all our online worship services and also to the written worship materials that are being sent out each week. Appreciate you for the positive feedback that we keep receiving. Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Ascension Sunday, along with some worship material for your meditations.

As part of "Thy Kingdom Come" global prayer wave, you have received the info about 50K steps to Pentecost, and invite you all to join in prayer during this time. Prayer as I understand is a time of waiting on God and also meeting the needs of the people around us. There is a special circuit "Thy Kingdom Come" prayer service on Tuesday, the 26th of May at 7pm on zoom, and encourage you all to join in that service.

As a church we are sending thank you cards to all our local shops that are open, expressing our gratitude for their services during these difficult times and also some prayer cards with our thoughts and prayers to shops that could not be opened due to the restrictions at our Heaton Moor village.

Kindly remember Audrey Bigger and her family as the funeral of Sam Bigger takes place on Thursday, 28th May at 10 am. Please light a candle and remember their family in your prayers.

May God's peace and love remain with each of you and may the Spirit of God lead you and strengthen you all during these strange times.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,
Raj



Sam Bigger's Funeral will take place on
Thursday 28th May at 10.00am

Can you please light a candle and say a prayer
during this time to remember Sam .

*God of mercy,
From whom we come,
by whose grace we live,
in whose love we are held at last;
surround us with your presence
that in our grief and loss
we may find assurance and hope
in the One who died for us and rose again,
even your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



May 21st — May 31st

Happy Belated 90th to Rev Brian Baker, he is fit and well and still studying short courses - just finished one on the immune system ! Betty Allport

To.....Lily Shore



Love from all at Heaton Moor United Church 🍀



Join the Circuit for a prayer meeting on the 24th May

The theme this year is 'Light up the world', so we are inviting you to put a candle in your windows each evening from Thursday 21st May until Sunday 31st May and while it is lit, spend 30 minutes in prayer

Don't Forget the Gift Day for the Church Charities

June 6th 2020



You can pay you donations in one of two ways

Cheques

Make Cheques Payable to:
Heaton Moor United Church
Reference on the back
Church Charities
Please send cheques to:
S.Heginbotham
8 Chinley Close
Heaton Moor
SK4 4ER

Bank Transfer

BACS transfer to:
Heaton Moor United Church
COOP Bank
Sort Code : 08-92-99
Account : 65561034
Reference: Church Charities

**Don't forget Gift Aid we can claim
an extra 25p per £ given .**

**So If you don't already do it and pay tax
please contact Sharon at:
office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk**

or

call 07471 065729

22nd May 2020

Returning after Lockdown? Ascension as a Re-turn towards being Witnesses

Acts 1:6-14

In the context of the pandemic today, as we are preparing towards the return from one kind of a normal to a different kind of normal, the discussions have been dominated by the term 'new' normal. We need to ask for whom is it going to be 'new' and who defines 'new,' for to the people on the margins the return is going to be a difficult normal, with issues of poverty, hunger, discrimination and inequality have been up on the rise. Many have been discussing about returning back to work after lockdown, with businesses and workplaces assessing on the preparations for return. While some have been suggesting 'building back better', others are working on making work spaces safe and secure from this virus. In such a context what should be the Christian response to that return? Ascension of Jesus Christ offers us some sign posts in that direction.

The Acts of the Apostles is the second book, after 'Gospel according to Luke', that Luke writes to his audience, explaining the work of the early Church, as a testimony of following Jesus Christ in their time and age. However, for the audience of this book, the ascension of Jesus Christ serves as an introduction, as a genesis to understand the work of the early Church. By making the ascension of Jesus Christ into the heaven as an introduction to the rest of the book of Acts, Luke invokes some lessons in the ascension of Jesus for understanding the work of the then early church and to our church today. To understand that we need to reflect on the last words of Jesus' earthly ministry as recorded in Acts 1:7-8.

Ascension of Jesus as a re-turn of the particular being to the cosmic being:

From ground zero on earth, for the disciples who witnessed the ascension of Jesus as recorded by Luke, Jesus ascended up into the heavens. But from the perspective of the trinitarian God, what we know as Jesus' ascension was in fact, a reception, as Jesus re-turned into God-self from material-self to a cosmic-self, from local-being to universal-being. In other words, in ascension, Jesus takes a (re)turn from a particular-being to a cosmic-being, and in that turn, God in Jesus calls his disciples to be witnesses to the ends of the world. In that re-turn of Jesus into the God of the cosmos, Jesus entrusts his local role, function and mission to his disciples to carry forward by being his witnesses. Having recorded the life and ministry of Jesus as the one who always chose to be with the people on the margins in his gospel, Luke mentions no detail about the kind of re-turn and reception of Jesus in his ascension. There is no coronation ceremony with all the pomp, glitz and fanfare in the streets of the heaven, like we assume to happen for a king (6v), in this episode of Jesus' ascension. Such silence on the part of Luke, re-emphasises the servant kingship of Jesus, whether in his earthly ministry or on his re-turn, God in Jesus always resists and denounces power, for God chooses to be among and with the vulnerable people always as Immanuel. The material broken-crucified-risen body now

ascends into heaven, for the broken body becomes the site of a transfigured body, seating at the right hand of the Father of the holy Trinity. The love of Trinity receives and embraces bodies into their fold, and the ascension of a bodily Jesus is a foretaste to such a reception of material body. Those that are embraced by the love of Trinity, are called to receive the broken-hearted and partake in the healing of their broken-infectious bodies.

The call for us as a church is to a re-turn of just rebuilding by being and becoming Jesus' witnesses, receiving people as they are, particularly those people who are on the margins and deliberately striving for inclusion of all people irrespective of their identities. For our communities, as we re-turn to that post-pandemic future, we are called towards building a society of justice, for we as churches will have to serve as spaces of loving embrace, caring and supporting one another transcending all barriers. God in Jesus, in his ascension took a re-turn from a particular-being to a cosmic-being, entrusting us as people of God to be his witnesses, which is to be Jesus' hands of love in serving the poor and needy, to be Jesus' feet of peace in walking a way of justice, to be Jesus' compassionate presence with the lonely and sick, and to be Jesus' mind in critically reflecting and asking difficult questions in addressing the unjust status quo, and strive for peace and justice in our world today.

Ascension of Jesus as a re-turn to be witnesses in powerlessness:

On the Mount Olivet, the last question that the apostles asked the risen Jesus, prior to his ascension was, "Lord, are you now going to give Israel, its own king again?" (6v) This question explains the disciples yearning for a political messiah in Jesus, for they were assuming that since he came out victorious from his death in resurrection, he would be enthroned as a king of Israel over against the Roman empire. In the ascension of Jesus Christ, the disciples had to witness a different kind of kingship in Jesus, which was founded on a way of grace and not on a way of power. Jesus' ascension was not a self-centred, pompous coronation ceremony as a king, but a reaffirmation of his servant-kingship, where he disperses power through the Holy Spirit to his disciples, ordaining them to be witnesses, beyond themselves, beyond geographies, beyond histories and beyond times, for it is recorded in 8v, "you shall be my witnesses from Jerusalem, to Judea to Samaria and to ends of the world." Jesus' ascension into heaven is not an occasion of celebrating the centralising of power, but a moment where he decentres his powers through the Holy Spirit to his disciples to witness his life, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. So when Luke starts this book of Acts with the ascension of Jesus as his introduction, he was emphasising that the church of God and the people of God are called to be his witnesses not by centralising powers, but in decentralising power, sharing in the vulnerability of people, for it is among such locations of vulnerabilities that the Holy Spirit does her work, starting from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the world.

The call for us as churches is to take a re-turn in being and becoming corporate witnesses of Jesus Christ, sharing our time, ministry and resources in the decentralisation of powers,

identifying with the powerless people, recognising that among and within such sites of vulnerability, the Holy Spirit dwells. The early church received that message from ascension seriously, addressed exclusion by deliberately involving and including people from every nation, race, ethnicity and identity to be part of God's movement for transformation, making the relevance of church felt. The later chapters of Acts of the Apostles are a testimony to such radical inclusions. This ascension Sunday is an opportunity for us to resist ascribing and seeking powers to the self, willingly giving up our privilege to be with the powerless people among and around us, and striving for inclusion of all people, dismantling any and every kind of walls. In such acts, witnessing to Jesus Christ births, evolves and happens.

Ascension of Jesus as a re-turn to witness beyond our spaces:

In Jesus' re-turn, Jesus promised the downpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God's people and also invited them to witness about God in Jesus from their own locality to neighbourhood to community to town to region to the ends of the world. Witnessing to Jesus has a ripple effect, for it cannot be contained to a territory but transcends territories to the ends of the time and space. Witness is not time bound, nor space bound, for we are called to live out for Christ beyond our parochial clusters and groupings with consistency. In verse 8, the word 'witness' in the Greek translation is 'marturios,' which is to say we are called to be witnesses, living out the values of Jesus Christ till the point of death. Re-turn as witnesses is costly, inviting us to join with Jesus in not settling to the normal but to move beyond in striving for justice and peace today. It is also important to note that Jesus pronounces 'witnesses' in plural seeking a corporate witnessing in our public spheres. It was an invitation of Jesus to live in the 'now' as a preparation for the future.

The calling for us as churches as we re-turn is to be and become the witnesses of Jesus Christ in that different normal, which is living out Jesus and living like Jesus. To be a witness today is to reimagine the story of Jesus Christ relevant for our times today, so that we live out Jesus and live like Jesus, without any compromise. The church when it re-turns, it will not be the same as it was before, with fewer numbers, fewer resources, more challenges, and many pastoral issues to deal with. In such a context, witness is to offer friendships, building bridges in the community, offering hospitality to the vulnerable and in addressing hunger and poverty. What would be the one thing you want to do as witnesses when the church re-turns? For me, it would be attending to the needs of the people in our communities as Jesus did, for in such acts, our faith is shown in actions, and witness happens.

Ascension of Jesus as a re-turn from the mountain-top experiences to ground realities:

In Acts 1: 1-11, the episode where Luke records the ascension of Jesus Christ, after Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples were struck staring at this spectacle of amazement. "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.” (9-11V) Ascension was a wake-up call to his disciples to not get struck with this gazing, but to get back to the ground realities in addressing the needs of the people around. Only in actions of compassion, justice, peace and dignity the descent of Christ happens and is witnessed. Douglas Farrow, proposes that the power of Spirit is left with the eucharistic assembly, for as they receive the body of Christ, they become the body of Christ, for ascension is ensured to all such bodies of materiality. Discipleship calls for a continuation of Christ’s work in ensuring justice and peace, liberating the bodies who have been bonded towards transformation into a new creation. Discipleship is attending to the grave realities of our context, and striving for the bodily liberation to all bonded by oppression and discrimination.

The call for us as churches as we seek a re-turn is to not pat our backs for the kind of worship services we have been leading online at this time, not to look at the amazement on (zoom)cloud, and not to be self-content with the performances at worship, but to get down to address the ground realities of hunger, poverty, homelessness, loneliness, issues of migrants, racial discrimination, domestic violence, etc. that we find within our own contexts. The two people who came and asked the disciples, “why do you stand looking toward heaven?” is also asking us the same question and is inviting us to descend, to re-turn to our communities, and witness for Jesus by attending to the needs of our people around us. Only in such acts, witness happens.

As we start to think about the return to the future, our call is towards a re-turn to be and become witnesses of Jesus by participating with Jesus in transforming our world today. One of the recent tweets from Learning Network in Northwest read out, “which approach to change and church leadership have you taken during lockdown? – transfer, translate, transform.” It is an important question we need to ask as churches as we plan to re-turn: transfer – carrying the same thing with a change in the medium; translate – interpreting in a new form with a change in communication; or transform – doing radically new thing for a new world, because the world around us is changing. After the lockdown we are called to re-turn towards that trans-formation as our act of witnessing collectively as a church.

Let me conclude with the words of an Indian writer Arundhati Roy, who has written recently on the pandemic:

“The pandemic is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”

May God grant us strength to re-turn to the future where we will walk through lightly, with little luggage, imagining and striving for another world, a world determined and lived in peace, justice, equality and dignity for the entire creation.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta, 21st May 2020 Ascension Day

Sunday 24th May 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

*Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds—his name is the LORD—be exultant before him.
(Psalm 68)*

As I come before you God help me to praise your name. Focus my mind on your presence with me and remind me that I am joined together with people around the world worshipping at home. May your name be glorified in our worship. Amen.

Hymn: Earth's creator, everyday God
Singing The Faith 45

Sing, read or pray the words or listen here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1oNP4vaW_c

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Earth's creator,
everyday God,
Loving Maker,
O Jesus,
you who shaped us,
O Spirit,
recreate us,
come, be with us.

In your presence,
everyday God,
we are gathered,
O Jesus,
you have called us,
O Spirit,
to restore us,
come, be with us.

Life of all lives,
everyday God,
love of all loves,
O Jesus,
hope of all hopes,
O Spirit,
light of all lights,
come, be with us.

In our resting,
everyday God,
in our rising,
O Jesus,
in our hoping,
O Spirit,
in our waiting,
come, be with us.

In our dreaming,
everyday God,
in our daring,
O Jesus,
in our searching,
O Spirit,
in our sharing,
come, be with us.

God of laughter,
everyday God,
God of sorrow,
O Jesus,
home and shelter,
O Spirit,
strong and patient,
come, be with us.

Way of freedom,
everyday God,
star of morning,
O Jesus,
timeless healer,
O Spirit,

flame eternal,
come, be with us.

Word of gladness,
everyday God,
word of mercy,
O Jesus,
word of friendship,
O Spirit,
word of challenge,
come, be with us.

Gentle father,
everyday God,
faithful brother,
O Jesus,
tender sister,
O Spirit,
loving mother,
come, be with us.

Our beginning,
everyday God,
our unfolding,
O Jesus,
our enduring,
O Spirit,
journey's ending,
come, be with us.

Alleluia,
everyday God,
now and always,
O Jesus,
alleluia,
O Spirit,
through all ages,
come, be with us.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

Let us pray together

Everyday God,

We praise you that you are with us in every
part of our lives and you never stop loving us.

We praise you for the world you created and
the beautiful things we see around us.

We praise you that you came to earth in Jesus
to show us in person how much you care
about us and the world we live in. As we

remember your ascension we thank you that
you did not leave us alone but sent your Spirit
so that we can always know you are with us.

You invite us to join in your work of loving
people and the planet and we pray that you
show us how we can share in your mission of
love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

A Collect for Aldersgate Sunday

God of overwhelming grace,
you ignited the spark of your grace in John
and Charles Wesley and a passion for holiness,
justice and sharing your great love with
others.

Warm our hearts that we may trust in you.
Renew our conviction and inspire us to
embrace new opportunities even in difficulty.
Pour out your spirit on your people that we
may be united in your love and ready to share
hope with the world through Jesus who is one
with you. Amen

Today's Reading from the New Testament:

Acts 1: 6-14

Today's Gospel Reading: John 17: 1-11

Time to Reflect

*"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up
towards heaven?"*

They hadn't really had a chance to think about
it. Surely it's the most human thing in the
world to keep watching the space where
someone was, to need to see to be able to
believe and start to understand, to need some
time to adjust to a huge change in the
features of your everyday life?

There has started to be talk in the media
about a "new normal". Many of us had
already started to experience the creeping
realisation that things will not quickly or
immediately go back to exactly how they
were. Our lives are going to look different for
a significant period of time, or for some of us
forever if we too have lost people who made
up the fabric of our lives.

Jesus' disciples have a promise, of the Holy Spirit to help them, but they don't know when. Like us they must adjust as best they can to the new circumstances of their lives.

I wonder what they understood of the ascension they had witnessed and the prayers they may have heard Jesus utter like the one we read in today's Gospel.

In this Jesus asks that he be glorified, not for himself but for his followers. As Jesus ascends he brings all his human experience with him so that it is known within God. Remember that how ever you are feeling today God is with you.

Jesus asks that God will protect his followers so that they might be united, one as Jesus and the Father are one.

What might we learn about unity and fellowship from our experience of isolation? How might we draw closer to God and to other people as we emerge into a new normal?

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

God our protector,

We come before you in prayer for your world, your children and ourselves.

We pray for the world that you have made. We thank you for the renewal of creation springing up as human activity has been restricted. We pray that we will learn to value these gifts and to live more gently in the future.

We pray for the leaders of nations making impossible decisions on our behalf. We pray that they will speak and act with integrity and protect those who are most vulnerable.

We pray for our church communities. We bring you our sadness at not being able to meet together and we thank you for the people finding it easier to explore faith at this

time. We pray that we will find new ways to reach out to the world.

We pray for the people we miss. Our friends and families and those we long to see face to face. We pray for safety and protection for our loved ones.

We pray for those who have lost someone they love and haven't been able to say goodbye. We pray that they will know the comfort of your loving presence and that you will show us how to reach out in love and friendship.

We pray for ourselves in these difficult days shared by so many people but also lived in isolation. Help us to know your protecting love and to live in the power of your Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer *Our Father*

Hymn: Hail the day that sees him rise
Hymns and Psalms 197

Sing, read or pray the words or you can find an older version of this hymn at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b_ODz_jgTs

Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!
ravished from our wistful eyes! Alleluia!
Christ, awhile to mortals given, Alleluia!
reascends his native heaven: Alleluia!

There the glorious triumph waits: Alleluia!
lift your heads, eternal gates; Alleluia!
wide unfold the radiant scene; Alleluia!
take the King of Glory in! Alleluia!

Him though highest heaven receives, Alleluia!
still he loves the earth he leaves; Alleluia!
though returning to his throne, Alleluia!
still he calls the world his own: Alleluia!

See! He lifts his hands above; Alleluia!
see! He shows the prints of love; Alleluia!
hark! His gracious lips bestow Alleluia!
blessings on his Church below: Alleluia!

Master, parted from our sight, Alleluia!
high above the azure height, Alleluia!
grant our hearts to you may rise, Alleluia!
following you beyond the skies: Alleluia!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

A prayer of blessing

Holy God,
be with me as I leave this time of worship.
May I know your presence in my everyday and
live your message of love and hope.
Amen

Original Materials by Alison Seren

Acts 1: 6-14

The Ascension of Jesus

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.'

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

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.

John 17: 1-11

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

After Jesus had spoken these words, he 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.