



# 'Worship at home' May 21<sup>st</sup> 2023



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This is Ascension Sunday  
in the church's liturgical calendar,  
marking the end of the Easter season.

During this time we have been reflecting on the ways  
in which we experience the risen Christ in our lives.

**Light a candle** as a reminder of the continuing presence  
of Christ, with us always.

## Opening

We give glory to God  
Faithful and steadfast  
Loving and gracious  
To all and in all

We give praise to the risen Christ  
Alive and active in our world  
From the beginning of time  
Always and for ever

We give thanks for the Holy Spirit  
Gifting and empowering  
Reconciling and renewing  
Enabling us to live in love



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After Jesus' resurrection at Easter, it seems that those first followers had a very real experience of Jesus' ongoing presence with them, for a period of around 40 days. During this time Scripture tells of his appearing to more than 500 people. We hear that he appeared through locked doors, yet also that people could see and hear and touch and talk with and eat with him. Their experience was that he was alive and with them still, in a new and different way. Then Jesus indicated that he was not going to be with them for much longer, however they would continue to experience his presence through the Holy Spirit.

**How do you continue to experience Jesus Christ  
in our world today?**

## Acts 1:1-11

*Dear Theophilus: In my first book I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles. For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God. And when they came together, he gave them this order: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."*

*When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you at*

*this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?"*

*Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them and said, "Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven." Good News Bible*

It is sometimes tempting to picture Jesus sitting on a cloud in the sky, looking down benevolently upon us. The book of Acts was written from a first century worldview in which most people believed in a three-tiered universe. One tier was the earth,



beneath which lay a second tier as a shadowy underworld. The third tier was heaven, where God dwelt, believed to be above the sky. When Jesus was no longer physically present with them, he was understood to have gone “up” to heaven, to be with God.

Another way to reflect on the story of Jesus’ ascension is to consider once again: **How do we continue to experience Jesus Christ in our world today?**



Perhaps we come to understand the Ascension of Jesus when we make time and space to experience a little more of “heaven”, as the kingdom of God, for ourselves.

**Prayerfully reflect on how you make time and space in your life to be open to experiencing God’s presence.**

**Do you have a regular daily devotional time?**

**Do you immerse your whole day in prayer?**

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*This is the grace of Ascension Day: to be taken up into the heaven of our own souls, the point of immediate contact with God. To rest on this quiet peak, in the darkness that surrounds God. To live there through all trials and all business with the “tranquil God who makes all things tranquil.”* - Thomas Merton

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Jesus instructs his followers to bear witness through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although he will no longer be present with them in the same way, God’s activity in the world continues. Jesus had embodied the kingdom of God, and now his followers are to continue his work.

**In what ways do you embody Christ and bring the kingdom of God to others?**

It is our task to tell the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, by our words and our actions. This is how we proclaim the gospel, and live out the kingdom of God in our world here and now. 3

## Prayer

Risen and ascended Lord Jesus, when we are numbed by the suffering of the world, take us back to the deep truth of your power and glory, of your invincible Kingdom, of your promise of reconciliation. In the knowledge of this truth, help us to bring our gaze to earth and find the strength to go into the world, to do your will on earth as in heaven, to build the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.



<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/churches/weekly-worship>

## Closing

God whose glory fills our world  
God whose life is closer than breath  
God whose love is stronger than death

**God, this God of life and love,  
Has sent an advocate to save us,  
Jesus Christ risen to the right hand of God.**

Not to condemn but to bring full life  
Not to accuse but to redeem  
Not to reject but to draw close

**God, this God of life and love,  
Has sent an advocate to save us,  
Jesus Christ risen to the right hand of God.**

God who hears the cry of our seeking souls  
God who sees the pain of our suffering bodies  
God who feels the loss of our grieving spirits

**God, this God of life and love,  
Has sent an advocate to be with us forever,  
The Spirit of truth abides with us eternally.**

Before us to teach and lead  
Within us to comfort and heal  
Around us to shield and protect

**God, this God of life and love,  
Has sent an advocate to be with us forever,  
The Spirit of truth abides with us eternally.**



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Image: Christ Ascension icon Michurin Bulgaria 16<sup>th</sup> Century