

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 24th May 2020

To be able to access the links, go to the bottom of this page and left click on the date. This will download the pdf in a new window, then simply click on the links as indicated.

Welcome

Last Thursday was Ascension Day. As we will read later from the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus appeared to the disciples for a period of forty days after his resurrection and then ascended into heaven. So, the theme of our worship today is Christ's ascension to the heavenly realm where he now sits at the right hand of the Father. As we worship, may we hear God's word of eternal life and be filled with his Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship: Psalm 99: 1-3

*The Lord is king!
Let the nations tremble!
He sits on his throne between the cherubim.
Let the whole earth quake!
² The Lord sits in majesty in Jerusalem,
exalted above all the nations.
³ Let them praise your great and awesome name.
Your name is holy!*

Song [Lord I lift your name on high](#) *Click on the link*



Prayer of Praise, Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and Lord's Prayer

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you. You are worthy of praise from every
creature in heaven and on earth. You have created the
world in all its wondrous beauty and richness.



All creation speaks to us of you glory,
the first flowers of springtime
the warmth of the sunshine and the refreshment of the rain
the comfort we receive in times of sorrow and sadness
for the fun we have working together, working to serve you.

We thank you for sending your Son to live here on earth.
He lived a perfect life, a life without blemish, yet he understands our human faults and failings.
Praise and glory be to your Almighty Father.

Your love and mercy is unbounded and so we bow before you confessing our neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments, our wrong doing, thinking, and speaking, the hurts we have done to others, and the good we have left undone.

Day by day we fail to grow into your likeness.

Forgive us all that is past, cleanse us from all our sin and raise us to newness of life to serve you.

We thank you that in his love for us, your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, went to the cross that we might be forgiven.

He rose again, on the third day, that we might have eternal life.

He ascended into heaven to be our advocate and to send the Holy Spirit to teach us, to be our guide and our strength and to give us the power to do your will.

Merciful God, we thank you for your limitless love. You are the Holy One, you are the Lord, you are the Most High; blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever.

As we rejoice in the triumph of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, fill your Church on earth with your power and compassion, that all may find forgiveness and know your peace,

We offer our prayers in Jesus' who gave us this prayer...

Our Father, in heaven, holy is your name. Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen

NHS Grampian, Chaplaincy Department – COVID-19 Update And Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for the work of NHS Grampian Chaplaincy department during the current pandemic. When I wrote to you two months ago we were anticipating a peak of activity that could have put NHS Grampian under severe strain. Mercifully that peak did not happen. Thank you for matching your prayers with action and observing all the advice issued by the Scottish Government and NHS Grampian, which I have no doubt contributed to there not being a peak.

What we are now expecting is smaller waves of activity, which although better in terms of coping mean it could all be much more drawn out. We can all be forgiven for likening this experience to that of Noah stuck in the Ark for a very significant period of time, how very appropriate then is the Rainbow symbol!



Contd/

The Healthcare Chaplaincy Team continue to function as a physical presence throughout the main healthcare sites across Grampian. Please continue to pray that my team all keep safe and healthy. Our support for patients has a particular focus on end of life care at present, however we will respond to all referrals for patient support, whether in Acute, Mental Health or other settings.

A very particular form of support that my team have facilitated in recent weeks are end of life “farewell” visits for relatives, typically in Intensive Care Units. As a team we are now also present for a number of hours most days in the Emergency Department, which is an innovation for us. This is multi-layered in its reach, as we are able to offer support to staff working there, but also to patients being admitted and potentially to relatives, but the contact for relatives has to be done virtually.

With Best Wishes; Mark Rodgers , Lead Chaplain , on behalf of NHS Grampian Chaplaincy Team . 20th May, 2020

Prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for the work of the Chaplaincy Team in our local NHS, and for all around the country. We thank you for their love and compassion for those in hospital and for patients’ families anxious about their love ones’ futures. We ask your protection upon all who are on the front-line that they may not contract this virus. We thank you for those seeking vaccines and medicines to combat its effects that we may be able to live in community once again. Bring peace to troubled minds.

We thank you that in these strange times have shown us new opportunities and have made us more aware of our need to be good neighbours in every sense of the term.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Bible Passages:

Our first Bible passage is from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. It is an account of Jesus’ Ascension. Notice the opening sentence. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke the Gospel writer. Both books were written to Theophilus (see Luke 1:3). Theophilus may have been an individual (some scholars suggest this might be Felix the Governor of Judea around 52-59^{AD}), but ‘Theophilus’ literally means, ‘God lover’ and so Luke may (more likely?) be addressing his books to all who love God.

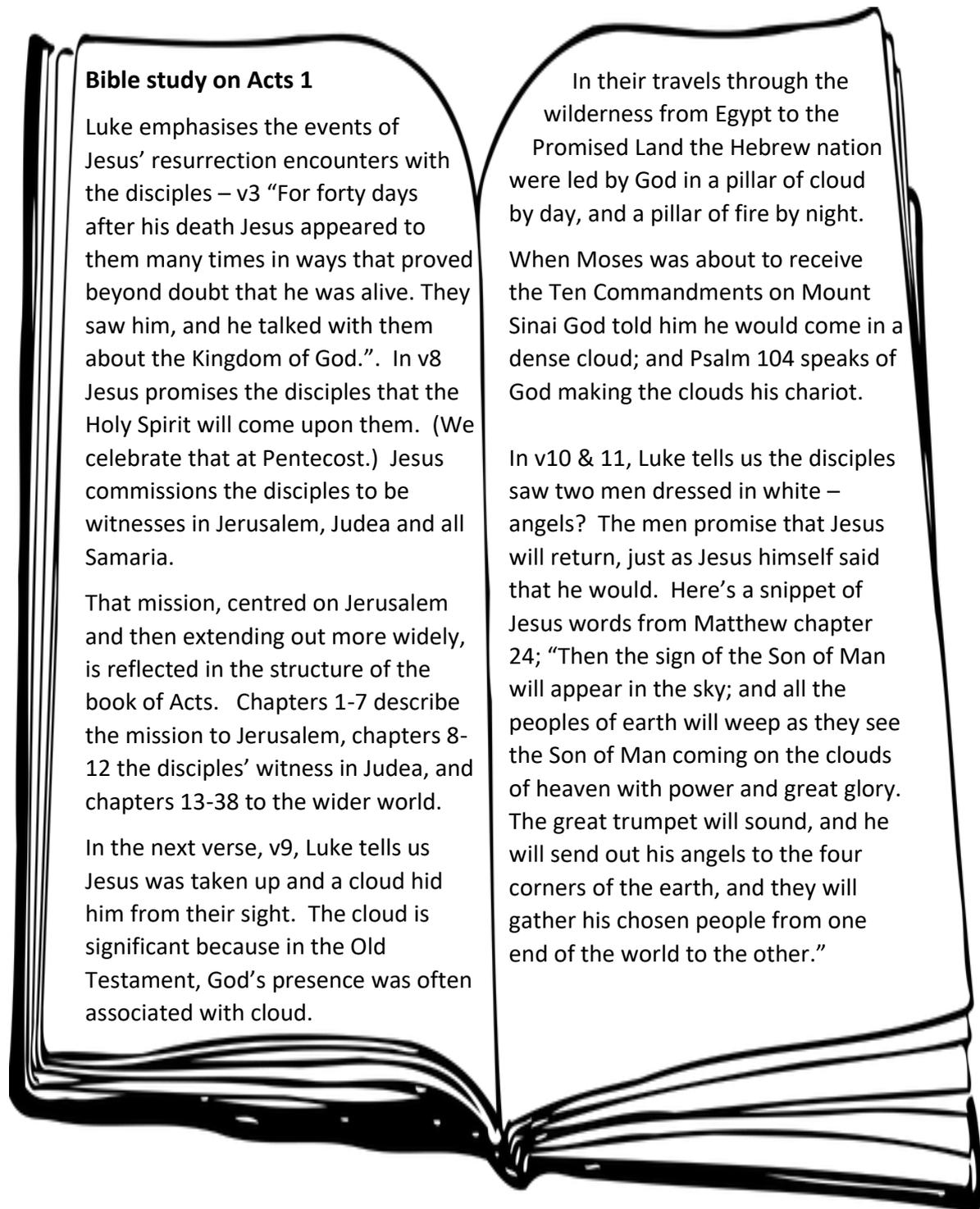
Acts 1: 1-14 (ESV)

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.



Bible study on Acts 1

Luke emphasises the events of Jesus' resurrection encounters with the disciples – v3 “For forty days after his death Jesus 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.”. In v8 Jesus promises the disciples that the Holy Spirit will come upon them. (We celebrate that at Pentecost.) Jesus commissions the disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and all Samaria.

That mission, centred on Jerusalem and then extending out more widely, is reflected in the structure of the book of Acts. Chapters 1-7 describe the mission to Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 the disciples' witness in Judea, and chapters 13-38 to the wider world.

In the next verse, v9, Luke tells us Jesus was taken up and a cloud hid him from their sight. The cloud is significant because in the Old Testament, God's presence was often associated with cloud.

In their travels through the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land the Hebrew nation were led by God in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

When Moses was about to receive the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai God told him he would come in a dense cloud; and Psalm 104 speaks of God making the clouds his chariot.

In v10 & 11, Luke tells us the disciples saw two men dressed in white – angels? The men promise that Jesus will return, just as Jesus himself said that he would. Here's a snippet of Jesus words from Matthew chapter 24; “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky; and all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other.”

Our Gospel reading is set in the Upper Room at the Lord's Last Supper, just prior to him leaving with the disciples for Gethsemane. Jesus prays.

John 17:1-11

After Jesus had finished speaking to his disciples, he looked up toward heaven and prayed:

Father, the time has come for you to bring glory to your Son, in order that he may bring glory to you. ² And you gave him power over all people, so that he would give eternal life to everyone you give him. ³ Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent. ⁴ I have brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you gave me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, give me back the glory that I had with you before the world was created.

⁶ You have given me some followers from this world, and I have shown them what you are like. They were yours, but you gave them to me, and they have obeyed you. ⁷ They know that you gave me everything I have. ⁸ I told my followers what you told me, and they accepted it. They know that I came from you, and they believe that you are the one who sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them, but not for those who belong to this world. My followers belong to you, and I am praying for them. ¹⁰ All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine, and they will bring glory to me.

¹¹ Holy Father, I am no longer in the world. I am coming to you, but my followers are still in the world. So keep them safe by the power of the name that you have given me. Then they will be one with each other, just as you and I are one.

Song [All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord](#) *Click on the link*



The Ascension

Although it was a long time ago I can still remember when our children were born. Nine months it took from conception, you'd have thought Diana would have learned to cut a few corners second time around! We did the classes and then eventually the time came for the birth. And then the baby was born and it was all over. But, of course, it wasn't all over it was just the beginning. It was the end of pregnancy but the start of parenthood. Pregnancy lasts nine months, parenthood for the rest of your life; birth is a watershed – literally, between pregnancy and parenthood.

The Ascension was similarly a watershed. In one way it was the end, Jesus left the earthly realm his earthly ministry complete; but really it was just the beginning, the church was about to be born.

Christ ascended, he was lifted up, taken to heaven, glorified. The disciples looked into the sky with amazement.

So, what does the Ascension mean? Where did Jesus go and what is he now doing?

As the disciples met with Jesus on the day of Ascension, they were more than a little confused about what was happening. Nothing that had happened over the previous six or seven weeks was what they had expected. They believed God had appointed Jesus to be the new King of Israel, the Messiah. They didn't expect Jesus to be crucified. That suggested he wasn't the Messiah; but then he rose from the dead, so perhaps Israel's glory would be restored after all? The disciples ask Jesus, verse 6 "are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel now?". It's a key question.

Many of the Jews at that time believed that when God restored Israel it would make them the world's superpower. Everyone would look to them with deference. Their concept of kingship and their understanding of Israel was very much an earthly one. They believed that Jesus would be king in some ordinary sense which is why James and John had asked to sit at his right and left when he reigned in glory. However, Jesus wasn't to be a King in the earthly sense. Jesus went to a place that isn't on earth, nor indeed on some planet far out into space.

Luke records Jesus being taken up into a cloud. When we read about clouds in the scriptures we are often reading about the presence of God, Jesus, God the Son, returned to the God the Father.

Matthew records Jesus himself saying that Jesus will be seated at the right hand of God (Matthew 26:64). Jesus sits in a place of honour and glory, authority and power. The Apostle Peter wrote; Jesus "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him." (1 Peter 3:22) Paul concurs, writing to the Ephesians, God "raised him [Jesus] 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 one to come. And he put all things under his feet.” (Ephesians 1:20-22)

Sitting down is an earthly image of rest once work is completed. Christ’s redeeming work was done, but the implication of his sitting on a throne in heaven is not one of inactivity. Earthly kings sit on their thrones at their coronation but then move and act in their realms. Christ continues to engage with creation exercising his authority and power.

The Ascension is about God’s Kingdom coming into this world through the work of Jesus. Jesus resurrection and ascension is about Jesus conquering death and being enthroned as ruler of the world at whose name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him as King, as the ancient Christian hymn so eloquently puts it (Philippians 2:10-11).

The Ascension is about Jesus fulfilling his promise to the disciples that he would go and prepare a place for his faithful people, reassuring them that, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:4). So, this place where Jesus now is, is a place with God the Father and a place where we can be too.

The Ascension is about our having someone who speaks up for us in the heavenly throne room. Jesus sitting at God’s right hand conjures up a delightful image of Jesus leaning across the heavenly throne talking to God the Father on our behalf. We. As John puts it, “if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1). That means that, Jesus, not only dealt with our sin on the cross and so can confirm that our sinfulness is dealt with, but also deals with God’s wrath. Jesus also prays for us. Paul wrote to the Romans; Christ Jesus was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (See Romans 8:34.) Jesus is actively intervening, speaking to God on our behalf. Now that’s reassuring.

When Paul wrote to Timothy he also spoke of Jesus not only as an intercessor but also as a mediator; “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6). There is only one God, not different God’s for different people. God wants everyone to be saved and reconciled to himself. Jesus is the go between, between human beings and their creator. As, Jesus said at his last supper; ““I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6).

Jesus ascension is about the King of kings and Lord of Lords (see Deuteronomy 10:17, 1 Timothy 6:15 & Revelation 17:14 & 19:16) reigning for ever and ever. He sits on his throne speaking on our behalf, taking care of our interests in heaven, making it possible for us to enjoy our relationship with our creator and heavenly Father; an insider – assuring us of forgiveness of sins by pointing continually to his atoning sacrifice. He is our advocate, there he is our mediator, and there he intercedes for us.

The ascension of Jesus Christ also means that God is with us every moment of every day through his Holy Spirit. At the Last Supper, Jesus had promised to send another comforter, (John 14:16-17) or helper, the *parakletos* (someone who is alongside) or Holy Spirit. He could not come until Jesus had ascended (John 16:7).

The coming of the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, is crucial to the continuing work of building The Kingdom. That’s a work of mission and it should not be lost to us that Jesus’ last words spoken prior to his ascension were words of mission;

“you are to be given power when the Holy Spirit has come to you. You will be witnesses to me, not only in Jerusalem, not only throughout Judea, not only in Samaria, but to the very ends of the earth!” (Acts 1:8)

Matthew’s account records Jesus saying;

“go and make disciples of all the nations and baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you and, remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

We are to be a missionary people, a missionary church. We are to be a church that proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ and make him known in the world. We are to witness to his love and working in our lives by our words and by the way we live, by being Christ-like to others and channels of his love.

The ascension of Jesus Christ means that we can have confidence in our final destination. We have assurance that we who have received life in Jesus Christ will enjoy that life with him in the presence of God for all eternity. Our future with Christ is so firm and secure that Paul described it as if it has already happened: “it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 2:5-6).

Prayers of the People for the People



Pray for	Prayers	Pray for
The Presbytery of Gordon	Lord Jesus, you have ascended beyond the horizon that our eyes can see and beyond the limits our minds can reach, yet you are with us always. We thank you that you are our friend, sat at the right hand of God the Father to be our advocate and intercessor.	Elders and minister of the church
Brothers and sisters in churches of other traditions to our own.	May our discipleship and service of your Kingdom be touched with the glory of heaven and may our lives bring people to you. Lord Jesus you have commanded us to take the Gospel to all the world. We thank you for those you teach and minister to us all. Be with the church that it may proclaim the Good News, and grow in its understanding	Wisdom and guidance as we tackle the challenges ahead.

<p>The Presbytery Plan Review Group</p> <p>Refugees who have no homes to return to.</p> <p>All who need to be cared for because they are too frail to care for themselves.</p> <p>Our frontline NHS staff and those who work behind the scenes.</p> <p>The leaders of nations, industry and commerce.</p>	<p>of scripture, grow in its life of prayer, and grow in its relationship with you. By the power of your Holy Spirit equip us to be effective fishers of men and women, a missionary church that makes you known in the world by word and love in action. Help us feed those who hunger and thirst for you and to be welcoming, accepting, affirming and forgiving. Lord we are your Church, may your Church be worthy of you.</p> <p>Lord Jesus, in you we see both humanity and the divine. You have shown us what human life can be like and you have taught us to love our neighbour. We pray for all in need;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people who go hungry day by day • all who sleep rough or have no place of stability and safety to call 'home' • those who are ill • people who feel alone • people who feel sad • those abuse, exploited or neglected • all weighed down by the responsibilities, pressures and demands of earthly life. <p>Loving Jesus, you gave of yourself sacrificially. We thank you for all who devote their lives to others. Pour out your blessing on care workers, all who work in our hospitals, schools and local Authorities and all who provide our modern means of communications and the utilities on which we rely.</p> <p>Loving Jesus, you sit in glory on your heavenly throne with power and dominion over all. Be with all leaders of peoples, grant them clear thinking, wise judgments, compassion for the weak, vulnerable and marginalised. May the decisions they make be for the common good with little regard for self-interest. We thank you for all who work to fight injustice and all who speak up for the voiceless. Bless their work, provide them protection.</p> <p>Loving Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace. There are so many places where there has not been peace for such a long time. May we not use our energies, time, and resource to kill maim and destroy, turning wives into</p>	<p>Greater collaborative working between parishes</p> <p>Communities where water is miles away and needs to be collected each day</p> <p>People unjustly discriminated against due to the colour of their skin, their race, gender or sexuality.</p> <p>Those supporting people with mental illness.</p> <p>Dentists and opticians.</p> <p>The UK and Scottish Governments</p> <p>Aid agencies, such as Christian Aid, and all who campaign for justice in the world.</p>
---	--	---

<p>The people of Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Israel and Palestine.</p> <p>Countries in conflict in Africa and Central America.</p>	<p>widows, sons and daughters into orphans, hospitals, homes, and schools into rubble. Be with the children of the world as they grow that they may see the devastation and hurt we can do to one another and be forgiving, willing to heal and rebuild lives and livelihoods, trust and hope. May they recognise injustice, and competing demands and claims and find peaceful means to resolve disputes.</p> <p>Living Lord, we thank you for your resurrection and that you have gone to prepare a place for us where we can be with you for ever. Comfort all facing death and those who mourn with your promise of eternal life.</p> <p>Lord hear our prayer, Amen.</p>	<p>That we will turn swords into ploughshares.</p> <p>Those known to you in need today</p>
--	--	--

Benediction and Blessing

Risen Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven:
 help us to seek and serve you,
 that we may join you at the Father's side,
 where you reign with the Spirit in glory,
 Send us into all the world to preach the Gospel:
 confirm us in this mission,
 and help us to live the good news we proclaim. Amen.

[Blessing](#) **click on the link**

One of the consequences of us not being able to worship together is that the church anticipates a fall in income. However, we will continue to incur costs, of insurance etc. There will be little financial saving to our not meeting, yet revenues could be severely hit. Please prayerfully reflect on this and, if you are able, continue to put aside your financial offering so that you can make your contribution for the work of the church when we next meet together. Thank you.

Thank you too if you already give by standing order or by bank transfer, that is much

appreciated.