

# worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Service for  
12<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Ascension  
The Revd Jenny Mills

*The Ascension: before and after*

## Call to Worship

We come to worship the source of love,  
the ground of our being, the creator of all that is.  
Let us join together in worship,  
listening and learning,  
supporting and encouraging one another,  
focusing on love, life, community and blessings,  
coming before God who lifts us up, holds us close  
and enables us to be more than we can ever imagine.  
Let us do this together, now, here in this place.

## Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Forgiveness

Gracious God,  
Your world is breathtaking, amazing and beautiful.  
Your world is challenging, dangerous and chaotic.  
In it, and all around us, we hear, see, touch, taste and smell so much.

We experience people, places, relationships, the beauty of creation,  
things that inspire and enthuse us  
and things that sadden and disappoint us.

Through all of these encounters and more, we find you.  
You are within, behind, in front and alongside us,  
even when we fail to acknowledge or notice you.  
We praise you for your consistency and love.  
And we are in awe of all you have made,  
all you continue to renew and revive,  
and all the changes and challenges that are around us.

Yet still, with so much understanding we are ignorant and unwise.  
We fail to really live as you have called us to.

We fall short and we mess up, we get it wrong,  
and we fail, often despite our best attempts and efforts.

We come with our prayers that give us time  
to consider where we have got things wrong,  
where we have abused our positions of power,  
where we have failed to speak out for those on the margins,  
where we have not lived your way, as Jesus showed us.

In a moment of quiet, I invite us all to hold before God  
the things for which we are sorry.  
The personal, relational, community and worldwide situations  
that we have not challenged or questioned or not responded to  
in a more loving, just and compassionate way.

*Silence*

God of all times and all places,  
as we hold our shortcomings before you,  
soften our hearts, inspire our thoughts, and help us turn again to you.  
We know that Jesus came to live on earth,  
to show us that your love is for all,  
and he taught that we can be forgiven.  
His words set us free.  
Let us know ourselves loved and blessed.  
May we forgive ourselves, forgive others, and go in peace. Amen.

## All Age Activity

Magic trick with a cup of water and cardboard...

I am going to put water in this cup and then put cardboard on the top and then turn the cup upside down, resting the cardboard in the palm of my hand and my hand on the cardboard. Once settled I will take away my hand holding the cardboard. And the water will not go everywhere. This seems impossible, doesn't it? What do you expect will happen? Will you need to see it with your own eyes before you believe it?

Do the trick.

*(Best practice this at home first as it can take a couple of goes to get it right!)*

What happened?

It is actually physics that made this happen. Now I don't know about you, but physics is not my strong point. I don't really understand it. But things can happen that I cannot understand, explain, or expect and I can still accept and believe that they are possible.

When Jesus was going to be leaving his friends he prayed for them and encouraged them and told them it would be OK. They did not understand what was going on (and at times they ran scared) but it was OK in the end.

Don't forget the prayer prompts on the website:

<https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/prayer-prompts-for-children/>

## A Prayer for Illumination

Open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to your Word  
through these words and through our thoughts.  
May we take what we have heard  
and find space to ruminate on it  
even after we have left this place. Amen.

## Readings

*St John 17:6-19 | Acts 1:15-17, 21-26*

## Sermon Notes

*St John 17:6-19*

This reading from the Gospel according to John comes as Jesus is with his disciples after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and before he is betrayed. It is known as the Farewell discourse and is the longest prayer by Jesus in any of the Gospels. This section finds Jesus speaking to God but speaking about the disciples, as they listen to him. This is so different from the times when we have heard that Jesus went away on his own and prayed. This time they are there and able to hear all he says. Jesus commends his disciples to God but also reminds them of all they have learned as they have journeyed with him and warns them that the next bit won't be easy but seeks God's protection for them. And the word sanctify at the end is Jesus acknowledging that he will be making a sacrifice through his death and that their task in continuing the work of Jesus is their sacrifice. Through being set apart for this role they are blessing those who are to come after them. Their role as disciples is vital in building on the work that Jesus started through his ministry.

*Acts 1:15-17, 21-26*

This text from the Acts of the Apostles, the second book written by the writer of the Gospel according to Luke, continues the story of Jesus following his death and resurrection. This reading comes after the Ascension of Jesus where we read he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight and this leaves the disciples bewildered. The

disciples returned to Jerusalem to the upper room again and there they, along with many other followers of Jesus (women named among them), devoted themselves to prayer. And then as this text begins, it is Peter who stands up to take on the responsibility of what happens next and it is this we will hear. In our first text Jesus was setting up the disciples to continue his work and here Peter realises that they need to be ready for what is next and so need to pick another disciple as Judas betrayed Jesus because the work continues.

## Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the community –  
three in one and one in three.

We believe in the Creator of all that is,  
who made heaven and earth as home for all.

We believe in the Son,  
who was born, grew up, ministered,  
was arrested and tried, condemned to death and rose again.  
Who lived on earth to show us how to live  
and who ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us.

We believe in the Spirit,  
who directs, inspires, enables, encourages  
and creates the dance for the whole of humanity to join in with.  
Whose power radiates within, beyond, around, and despite us,  
bringing possibilities and opportunities  
we could never have experienced without her.

We believe in God the community -  
modelled for us and calling us daily to participate.  
We believe in love - creator, redeemer and life source.

We believe.

## Offertory

Loving God, all we have and all we are we offer to you now.  
As we bring our gifts of money, as they are transferred from our banks  
or given in donations, we pray that they will be used  
to further your kingdom here on earth.  
We trust that they will make a difference,  
but we know that our lives, our time and our faithfulness  
are even more important to you.

May we find ways to live and love that honour and glorify you  
and make your presence seen where we find ourselves in your world.  
Today and on into the future. Amen.

## Prayers of Intercession

God of grace and God of glory, hear our words and pleas we pray.  
As this world is in such turmoil there's so much we need to say.

People's words and people's actions speak of power, hurt and pain.  
War, destruction, senseless killings, things may never be the same.

We lament at what we witness, all too often selfish ways  
cause great damage and such sadness - desolation every day.

When we look at things around us - isolation and despair,  
hunger, struggles, not enough-ness, will it ever be repaired?

It feels heavy and depressing, here at home and far and wide,  
anger, hate and domination, nowhere safe to run and hide.

And it isn't just the people that are hurting and need care,  
all creation groans and suffers, help is needed everywhere.

So today we come before you, God of love and God of all,  
knowing you will hear our pleading as upon you we now call.

Bless the people, places, countries that need respite, help or food.  
Open eyes and hearts and minds to see that things can be renewed.

May all those who are in power govern wisely with good heart,  
seek to serve with honest actions try to play their chosen part.

And may we, as people seeking to walk in the Jesus way  
know that all our words and actions have a role and part to play.

In this silence we now offer prayers for those we know and don't.  
Hear our prayers dear God we pray now  
fill our hearts with love and hope.

*Silence*

God of grace and God of glory take these prayers and shed your light.  
Bring new hope and offer solace, touching all things in your sight.

As we move on from our worship, going home and living life.  
May our lives reflect your presence, may our actions show your might.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Blessing

May we be faithful in prayer  
Faithful in living,  
Faithful in following Jesus.  
May all we do speak of love, joy, peace and hope.  
And may God: Creator, Son and Sustainer,  
bless us, those we love and those we struggle to love.  
Now and forever. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise	252		300	202
The Head that Once Was Crowned With Thorns	257	438	312	647
God who spoke in the beginning	60			
Lord, speak to me, that I may speak	613	542		444
For the healing of the nations	620	706	696	
Let us build a house (All Are Welcome)		198	409	
As the glory of Creation			725	
Lord for the Years	603	159	470	428
Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates		289		
We Sing A Love That Sets All People Free		622		
Take This Moment, Sign, and Space		501	513	
Go Forth and Tell	574			178

RS – Rejoice & Sing | CH4 – Church Hymnary 4 | StF – Singing the Faith | MP – Mission Praise