

Ascension Day



Stained Glass Window from Saffron Walden Essex

Ascension Day is one of the most neglected festivals in the Church of England today. It always falls on a Thursday, and this country unlike many continental countries, does not recognise its importance by making it a public holiday. It suffers from the further disadvantage that the season it ushers in is a short one, and even this is coming to be dominated in the latest lectionaries by preparation for the celebration of Pentecost ten days later. In the past our local schools would come to school in the morning, attend the Ascension Day service then have the rest of the day off.

In recent years the Church of England has used this short season and called it 'Thy Kingdom Come' which is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray between Ascension Day (21 May) and Pentecost (31 May) for more people to come to know Jesus.

Apps and service available for this season at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/thy-kingdom-come>

Prayer and Care

It has been heartening to see how people have shown love and kindness, serving and loving the most vulnerable, during this unprecedented time. As a result, we pray for those we know and love to become followers of Jesus, how could we demonstrate this also in deed (in keeping with social distancing guidelines) (Thy Kingdom Come)

From Ascension Day to Pentecost we will use each day as a day of Prayer. As we can now see one other person from a different household in an open public space and obeying strict social distancing, we may meet another person from our church for daily prayer.

Ascension Day Prayer and Readings

The Collect

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

For the Epistle Acts 1.1-11

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The Gospel Luke 24:44-53

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

The Ascension of Jesus

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Ascension Day Service

The full service by Revd Steven Poss can be seen on the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-v3HHJqZACydUsZPg8fPplkarohJWljb>



Ascension Day reflection by the Archbishop of York

<https://vimeo.com/419859233>

Permission to use the picture of the Ascension Day Window was given by St Mary's Church Saffron Walden. St Mary's Church is presently in an interregnum looking for a new priest to lead the twelve churches in that area.

Lord Jesus, protect and grow St Mary's church and the team, that they may serve you together in this period of vacancy. Please guide those who are seeking the right minister for this church, and those who are seeking the right church for their ministry. **Amen**