

## Sunday 'Spiritual Communion' After Ascension

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

### Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

**We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.**

### Opening Sentences Reminding us where we are on Our Christian Journey

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, for 40 days we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the resurrection of our Lord, his bursting from the tomb and his defeat of the power of sin and death. He appeared to his disciples many times and told them about the kingdom of God. And now we recall how he left this earth and returned to his Father, ascending into heaven to take his throne over all dominions and powers.



**Seeing we have a great high priest who has passed into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us offer him the praise worthy of his name.**

### Prayers of Preparation and Confession

**Almighty God to whom all hearts are open,all desires known,and from whom no secrets are hidden:cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,that we may perfectly love you,and worthily magnify your holy name;through Christ our Lord. Amen**

We pause for a moment and reflect on God's life-giving presence in every part of the body, in everything around us, in the whole of our life. Let us -

- Thank God for our freedoms and opportunities
- Consider how we can use them to do what we can for those who are oppressed or burdened.
- Consider how we can use our voice with kindness and compassion as a source of God's love

In our everyday tasks, remind us, Lord, that you are always there beside us..

You may wish to pray:

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**



A reading from the Gospel

Read Matthew 28:16-20 (A reflection attached to the end of the service sheet)

### Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Our Father...**

Let us give thanks for the ascension of Jesus into heaven and ask him to be with us by His Spirit now and in the week ahead.

God our Father, you have raised our humanity in Christ and have fed us with the bread of heaven: grant that, nourished with such spiritual blessings, we may set our hearts in the heavenly places; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.  
Be with me and those whom I love and pray for as I offer myself to you.  
Hear my prayers for others and for myself, and keep me in your care..

### Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**



The Peace of the Lord be always with you

## Reflection on Matthew 28 v 16-20

This morning we reflect on the last moments of Jesus' time on earth. We are perhaps prone to focus more on the **words** He used in what is often known as the 'Great Commission' and so we can sometimes miss the **context** of this powerful mission statement. The danger is when we forget the context it can lead to us hearing the call to Christian mission and being overwhelmed by the charge. Our response is how can we, the rather anxious and uncertain followers of Christ in the modern world, make disciples of others? So let us consider the context in which these first disciples were given their commission .. and look at what they achieved!

Gathered around Jesus were 11 men rather exhausted and bedraggled by the events of the last few weeks .. in fact the last 3 years of following this reckless preacher had not been easy. The very fact that there were 11 of them was in itself dispiriting. One of their own had betrayed the band of brothers and left the cause .. no doubt acting out the same questions and fears which they themselves had considered from time to time. So not 12 but 11 followers heard Jesus last words. An incomplete band we might say, in more ways than one.

So the commission to 'go and make disciples' did not come to a well educated and resourced team of entrepreneurs and salesmen. It did not come to a team of well versed religious leaders. It was given to what was largely a group of poor fishermen, with a repentant tax collector and reformed Zealot thrown in. Under-resourced and without experience the disciples were charged with a task of teaching men and women of every tongue and nation. Many of these Galilean men barely spoke their own language without a difficult to understand regional accent we are told! So there is perhaps no surprise that some doubted! How could this group 'small in number and limited in education, make disciples of all nations?

Given this context there is perhaps more than we had imagined which resonates with our own call to be and make disciples in the Church today. We read the words "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded' and we are hesitant. We doubt. These words are a powerful charge and we feel we are not resourced or equipped to meet the challenge. It would be easy to dismiss the commission as given to others but not ourselves. But remember the context. The first disciples were no better educated, or committed, or certain than us. They doubted, they were less in number than required, they were tired and out of their depth. And yet 2000 years on the Great Commission is still being undertaken. It seems the mission was achieved through something other than skill and courage.

To what can we attribute the success of their mission. It can only be the presence of Christ's Spirit amongst them. That Spirit of love and devotion and service to God and to one another that Jesus had shown them. It can only be their willingness to trust that same Spirit in the conversations and meetings and activities they undertook in their lives. It is true there were some among them who doubted, some who had given up before they had started and some who did not know where to start. Yet Jesus seems to have spoken to them all. And it would seem, recognising our hesitations and weaknesses, Jesus speaks to all of us too saying 'Go and make disciples - for I Am with you always'. So take these words of Jesus Great Commission and let them settle in your heart. And ask what do they mean for me today?