**PT. CHEVALIER CO-OP PARISH**

**FACEBOOK LIVE STREAM SERVICE 10.30AM**

**24th May 2020**

***Rev. Dr. Fei Taule’ale’ausumai Davis***

***ASCENSION SUNDAY***



**INTROIT:**

Be Still, For The Presence Of The Lord  
The Holy One Is Here  
Come Bow Before Him Now  
With Reverence And Fear  
In Him No Sin Is Found  
We Stand On Holy Ground  
Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord  
The Holy One Is Here

Be Still, For The Glory Of The Lord  
Is Shining All Around  
He Burns With Holy Fire  
With Splendor He Is Crowned  
How Awesome Is The Sight  
Our Radiant King Of Light  
Be Still For The Glory Of The Lord  
Is Shining All Around

No Work Too Hard For Him  
In Faith Receive From Him  
Be Still For The Power Of The Lord  
Is Moving In This Place

**Call to worship Psalm 68**

4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;  
   lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds—  
his name is the Lord—  
   be exultant before him.

**Prayer of Approach**

Lord of all time and space,  
who was and is and is to come,  
we worship and adore You  
for You alone are worthy of our praise.  
There is none before you,  
none above you.  
Your glory is ever before us  
and this morning we are glad to take our place alongside all those who even now, on earth and in heaven,  
are raising their voices to exalt You,  
their minds to know You  
and their hearts to love You.

May our worship be a fitting offering – a gift in return to the giver of every good and perfect gift.

In Jesus’ name, we pray; Amen.

**WELCOME:**

Kia ora, Fakalofa lahi atu, malo lelei, Talofa lava, ni sa bula, kiaorana, taloha ni, dumela, anyonhaseo, Namaste, halo, greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**OPENING SONG: By Naida Hearn**

* Naida Hearn was brought up as a Methodist in Palmerston North, New Zealand. As she grew in her faith, she became interested in the different Biblical names given to Jesus and their meanings. She even made a list of those names.   
    
  One day when she was about 30-years-old, Naida was contemplating the names given to Jesus written on a piece of paper, as she did the washing. "While I was doing the family washing, the Lord gave me the first line of a song. I began singing, 'Jesus, name above all names.' I continued and sang the whole song just as you hear it today. I just opened my mouth and all of the words came out, the melody and everything. I just sang it."   
    
  "I left the washhouse and went down into the sitting room and worked the song out on music paper. I then said, 'Lord, is that OK? Is it all right like that? Yes, it was all right. I then went back to the washing. It was just that simple. It was a straight-out lead from the Holy Spirit, absolutely. I can't say I thought about this or I thought about that; I just started on 'Jesus, name above all names,' and it carried on all by itself."
* The song was soon being sung by her local congregation at New Life Church in Palmerton North and in time it became a worldwide favorite. Naida said, "The Spirit impressed on me that it was to be sung as a love song. It's all about Him. You should sing it softly, slowly and reverently. This is what He wanted."

Jesus, Name Above All Names  
Beautiful Saviour, Glorious Lord  
Emmanuel, God Is With Us  
Blessed Redeemer, Living Word.

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**MINISTRY OF THE WORD:**

## Acts 1:6-14

## The Ascension of Jesus

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ 7He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ 9When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.10While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been 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. 13When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

Gracious God,  
this we know –  
that we fall short of the way of life You call us to. In thought and word and deed,  
there’s much for us to be ashamed of;  
much that must grieve You.  
**Forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

Loving God,  
we’re not in the dark.  
You have revealed Yourself to us  
in all that You have made  
and through Your word  
and most especially, in Jesus.  
Light has come!  
And yet we have wandered from Your way, as if stumbling in the dark.  
**Forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

Patient God, this we know –that You are compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in unfailing love. And so we call out to You; look kindly upon us and forgive us – when we know not what we do  
and when wilfully we choose our way above Your way. **Forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

Gracious God,  
we are assured that we are forgiven –  
not because we deserve it  
or because we can commit to doing better next time but by Your amazing grace.  
Yes, by Your amazing grace  
You have removed our sins from us,  
as far as the east is from the west.  
**We are forgiven, Lord. We rejoice!**

All for the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**FAMILY TIME: Do dogs go to heaven? by Joy Cowley**

**SONG:**

My God loves me,

And all the wonders I see

A rainbow shines through my window

My God loves me.

(Tongan) Oku ofa ‘a hoku Otua iate au

Mo ia koa pe ‘olu ou vakai atu kiai

‘Ae huelo ‘oe ‘umata olu ne kapui au

‘Oku ofa ‘a hoku ‘Otua iate au.

(Niuean) Haaku Atua fakalofa kia au

Moe tau mena kua kitia

Koe Tagaloa kua kikila mai

Haaku Atuaa fakalofa kia au

(Samoan) E alofa le Atua ia te a’u

Ma mea matagaofie ua ou vaai ia

Le nuanua ua sulusulu mai

I lo’u fa’amalama

E alofa le Atua ia te a’u.

**Prayers of intercession**   
Lord, we begin by praying for our neighbours – the people living nearest to us right now. We may not know the details of their situation but we believe that You do  
and so we lift them before You now.  
**Silence**

Lord, we pray for our congregation and for neighbouring congregations in our Presbytery and community. Bless all those who minister, in whatever capacity.  
Send Your Spirit, we pray, to revive and renew your Church.  
**Silence**

Lord, we pray for our community – the community You’ve called us to serve.  
We bring before You those who are suffering and struggling, those who are lost and lonely, those who see no light at the end of the tunnel.  
**Silence**

Lord, we pray for our nation – for those who are in positions of responsibility and authority. Guide them and grant them wisdom that their leading might be according to Your will  
and always with the greater good in mind.  
**Silence**

Lord, for our world we pray – in all its brokenness and pain. Where there is hatred, we look for love.  
Where there is pain, we look for healing.  
Where there is division, we look for unity.

We look for the coming of Your Kingdom  
and we commit ourselves to working for the coming of Your Kingdom.

All our prayers we ask in Jesus’ name who taught us to pray

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**REFLECTION**

May the words of my mouth…

I remember sitting with one of our retired Samoan ministers a few years ago Rev. Kenape Faletoese and his wife Faavaoa they have both since died. Kenape said to me, I have a joke to tell you, it actually wasn’t a joke it was a true story of their early life in N.Z. He said in the early days in Christchurch when the kids were young we were cold and poor and hungry. On one of the days when things were really bad I said to my wife in Samoan “tatou te ola I le faatuatua “you have to live by faith” her reply was “e mafai on saka le faatuatua” can you boil (cook) faith? In other words, can we eat faith my kids are hungry. That very afternoon a Cook Island man knocked on their door and he stood there holding a leg of lamb, that fed them for the whole week. Yes, you can boil faith afterall.

It’s these sorts of miracles that happen in our lives that can help us accept texts like this reading in Acts more readily, particularly if we have experienced something of the miraculous in our lives. I wonder how easy it is to accept these writings when one has never encountered anything out of the ordinary?

***“…****But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky?...”*

Is this a work of fiction? These 11 verses are totally foreign to our 21st century understanding of physics and historical reliability. How else would contemporary witness to these universal events of the business of Almighty God be expressed, explained or rationalized? These were heady days – there had been a resurrection and their Lord was seen to leave them. He was keen to inform them that he left them not alone but that the comforter, the Holy Spirit would come and be with them.

I always find it hard to preach on Ascension and transfiguration. Somehow because it happens to Jesus we accept these readings without question, he turned water into wine of course he can do these miracles which are beyond our comprehension and understanding. Have you ever been questioned by your children or Sunday school about these same events that we have read today? What was your answer, how would you respond to day if asked?

**The Westminster Confession of Faith** is a [Reformed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed) [confession of faith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confession_of_faith), in the [Calvinist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinist) theological tradition. As Presbyterians this is part of our confession of faith. Although drawn up by the [1646](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1646) [Westminster Assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Assembly), largely of the [Church of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England), it became and remains the 'subordinate standard' of doctrine in the [Church of Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Scotland), and has been influential within [Presbyterian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian) churches worldwide including the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa N.Z. We have contextualized it and added Kupu Whakapono so that it becomes a part of our New Zealand Aotearoan context..

In [1643](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1643), the [English Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Parliaments_of_England) called upon "learned, godly and judicious Divines", to meet at [Westminster Abbey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey) in order to provide advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government and discipline of the Church of England. Their meetings, over a period of five years, produced the confession of faith, as well as a [Larger Catechism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Larger_Catechism) and a [Shorter Catechism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Shorter_Catechism). For more than three centuries, various churches around the world have adopted the confession and the catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the [Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible).

It was written in the language of the time and the context of that time and the context of this time has changed over 300 years. And so it is with the language and context of the times the book of Acts and the first chapter of Acts was written.

What do you do with an Ascension?” (1) I felt relieved to know that I wasn’t alone in my thoughts. What do we do with this day? It’s tempting to pass over it - to think of something else to talk about. But there it is, both in Acts and in Luke – Jesus ascending into heaven. What do we do with it?

I think we find ourselves wondering what to do with the Ascension in part because our thinking, our understanding, has changed from the days of Jesus.

This passage from Acts shows us clearly that Jesus’ disciples had unrealistic expectations of what He had meant by His kingdom. In many of His parables Jesus had spoken about this kingdom that was already at hand (Mark 1:15). The Parable of the Sower was disclosing to them ‘the secrets of the kingdom’ (Luke 8:10), and the three short parables in Matthew 13:44-50, the ‘Hidden Treasure’, ‘The Pearl of Great Price’ and ‘The Net’, all spoke of some impending era which was very close, so close it had already come. But they still didn’t understand, for they thought this kingdom was going to be centred in Israel, with Jerusalem as a world capital. Jesus now firmly dismisses that idea. They must wait for the Holy Spirit to be given in a special way and then they would be enabled to embark on the task God was about to give them.

Then Jesus was taken from them and it must have seemed that they had been abandoned. The clue to the ascension is that the physical presence of Jesus, which could only be present on earth in one place at a time, was going to be replaced through the gift of the Spirit, by His spiritual presence which could be present in every company and in every land across the entire world.

In Acts, we see Jesus literally being swept up, up and away into the clouds, out of sight of the disciples. For the faithful in the first century AD, this wouldn’t have seemed very odd or supernatural. Heaven was believed to be literally above the earth, which was, to them, the center of the universe. If you went up high enough, you would literally find heaven. In the same way, you would have to ‘descend’ to get to hell – it was down, beneath the earth. So for Jesus to return to God, early believers could only imagine that Jesus had to literally go up into the clouds, and there he would find heaven. Today, we still might point up to refer to heaven, or look up when we’re talking to God or talking about God. And we might still think of hell as a somewhere way down there. But in our rational minds, we actually think differently. I think in a sense we view heaven as that which contains all that is greater than we are – figuratively above us. But rationally, we’ve learned since the days of Jesus about the universe and the earth and what you find when you go up, up, and away into the clouds. So, spiritually, we’ve adjusted our thinking as well. Perhaps today we don’t view heaven as a physical place that you could get to if you just travel high enough. I’d be a lot more willing to travel on airplanes if that were the case! Instead, we maybe think of heaven, a place where we will be united with God, as something of a different realm altogether – literally outside of this universe – a place you travel to not physically, but spiritually.

So how do we connect with this event, when our whole mind set has changed from what it was in Jesus’ time? We’re left with a scene of Jesus ascending to be with God. In Acts, our passage comes from the time between Easter and Pentecost – the time we are now in – the Fifty Great Days of Easter. During this time, Acts records, the resurrected Jesus has been demonstrating “convincing proofs” of his identity and speaking to people about the kingdom of God. Luke, the author of both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, also writes that Jesus opened the disciples’ minds to understand all the scriptures. In both readings, from Acts and Luke, Jesus promises that the disciples will soon be receiving another power, the Holy Spirit. And then, he ascends into heaven.

So what? What does it mean for us? Sometimes, perhaps, we even forget that Jesus was recorded as spending so much time on earth after his resurrection. 40 days of time with the disciples. Can you imagine having an extra 40 days with any loved one you have lost? But out of this 40 days, we have barely a description from Luke of what has been going on. So what message can we receive from Ascension Sunday? This is a time of transition for all of us, it is time for us all to step up and be the Christ in our world. This is a time for new beginnings and new possibilities. Jesus has shown us the way and now it is time for us to practice it ourselves.

We are called to share in this joy of transition, even as we are called to share in the task of discipleship. Don’t look up! Instead, look out, at the world around you, at the people who need you, and who need God’s grace so much.

**CLOSING HYMN: I DON’T KNOW WHY by Andre’ Crouch**

I don't know why Jesus loved me

I don't know why He cared

I don't know why He sacrificed His life

Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did

He left His mighty throne in glory

To bring to us redemption's story

Then He died but He rose again

Just for you and me

Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did.

He left His mighty throne in glory

To bring to us redemption's story

Then He died but He rose again

Just for you and me

Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did.

Where would I be if Jesus didn't love me?

Where would I be if Jesus didn't care?

Where would I be if He hadn't sacrificed His life

Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did

I don't know why Jesus loved me

(Oh I don't know why)

I don't know why He cared

(Oh I don't know why)

I don't know why He sacrificed His life

Oh, but I'm glad (so glad), so glad He did

Oh, but I'm glad (so glad), so glad He did

**Sending**

As we go from here,  
remind us, God,  
that this is the beginning, not the end. That You call us to Yourself  
then send us out to love and to serve. So may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with you all –  
and with those you love  
and with those you struggle to love – now and always.  
Amen.

**Sung blessing:** May the Lord Mighty God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes to seek his face and his grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God, bless and keep you forever.

BENEDICTION: Let us say the grace to one another. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen.