

ALDRSGATE SUNDAY 2020

The God of all grace calls us to be what the Spirit made us in baptism:

God has made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of the One who called us out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

HYMN [O for a thousand tongues to sing](#) (you may like to find your own version on YouTube depending on which tune you prefer! Many do not have the verses in the same order as 'Singing the Faith'. This is a lively version)

As I come before you God help me to praise your name. Focus my mind on your presence with me and remind me that I am joined together with people around the world worshipping at home. May your name be glorified in our worship.

Amen.

World Methodist Council Social Affirmation:

We believe in God, creator of the world and of all people;
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us,
who died and rose again;
and in the Holy Spirit,
present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

We believe; God, help our unbelief.

We rejoice in every sign of God's Kingdom;
in the upholding of human dignity and community;
in every expression of love, justice and reconciliation;
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;
in the abundance of God's gifts
entrusted to us that all may have enough;
in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

Glory be to God on high; and on earth, be peace.

We confess our sin, individual and collective,
by silence or action:
through the violation of human dignity
based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;
through the exploitation of people
because of greed and indifference
through the misuse of power
in personal, communal, national, and international life;
through the search for security
by those military and economic forces
that threaten human existence;
through the abuse of technology
which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

Lord, have mercy;

Christ, have mercy;

Lord, have mercy.

We commit ourselves individually and as a community
to the way of Christ: to take up the cross;
to seek abundant life for all humanity;
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;
to risk ourselves in faith, hope, and love,
praying that God's kingdom may come.

The kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. **Amen**

Collect for Aldersgate Sunday

God of overwhelming grace,

you ignited the spark of your grace in John and Charles Wesley and a passion for holiness, justice and sharing your great love with others.

Warm our hearts that we may trust in you.

Renew our conviction and inspire us to embrace new opportunities even in difficulty. Pour out your spirit on your people that we may be united in your love and ready to share hope with the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit.

One God, now and for ever. **Amen**

[Acts 1: 1-11](#)

HYMN 300 - [Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!](#)

Or – [The Same Power](#) (Worship Central)

Reflection:

Ephesians 4: 8 Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.' 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.



When Jesus left the disciples, I can imagine them standing there confused, perhaps with their mouths open, looking up towards heaven. They were used to being disciples, accustomed to following Jesus, and quite frankly they were used to Jesus doing the teaching, Jesus doing the healing, Jesus challenging the Pharisees, touching the lepers, turning over the tables... Jesus doing the praying, Jesus breaking the bread, Jesus giving his body and his blood, Jesus doing the forgiving.... What were they going to do without him? They had expected the Kingdom to arrive suddenly – perhaps some were still hankering after their thrones: 'is this the time when you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6) Instead – here was a new normal – they were not to be disciples only, but also apostles – the ones being sent out as witnesses. I wonder how long it took for it to dawn upon them that Jesus was leaving them work to do – that they were to take part in restoring the Kingdom?

The celebration of the Ascension signifies the triumphal entry of Christ, through eternal gates, returning to his throne bearing the scars of love and forgiveness. But important too is the significant ministry the ascended Christ entrusts to us – the whole people of God. Please note in Ephesians 4:12 – the new normal – the work of ministry, of building up the body of Christ – this is entrusted to every Christian (and yes we are all saints in the sense of being holy, set apart for God). After John Wesley had his heart strangely warmed, he got into trouble for challenging hierarchy and tradition. He got the gospel out of the church and into the streets, he encouraged the ministry of lay people (and women) and he (illegally) ordained ministers for overseas work (when only Bishops were supposed to do that). He also caused controversy by preaching 'evangelical perfection'. That might be a topic for another day... but in brief, Biblical 'perfection' is about fulfilling our purpose and becoming fully who God intended us to be. So, if salvation frees us from the power and consequences of sin, then our goal as Christians is to come 'to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph 4:13). Has your heart been warmed by the love poured into it by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5)? Are you growing towards maturity? What gifts has Christ given you? What work of ministry is the new normal for you?

Why are you standing there looking up toward heaven? Christ equips us to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Intercession:

God our protector,

We come before you in prayer for your world, your children and ourselves.

We pray for the world that you have made.

We thank you for the renewal of creation springing up as human activity has been restricted.

We pray that we will learn to value these gifts and to live more gently in the future.

We pray for the leaders of nations making impossible decisions on our behalf. We pray that they will speak and act with integrity and protect those who are most vulnerable.

We pray for our church communities.

We bring you our sadness at not being able to meet together and we thank you for the people finding it easier to explore faith at this time.

We pray that we will find new ways to reach out to the world.

We pray for the people we miss. Our friends and families and those we long to see face to face.

We pray for safety and protection for our loved ones.

We pray for those who have lost someone they love and haven't been able to say goodbye.

We pray that they will know the comfort of your loving presence and that you will show us how to reach out in love and friendship.

We pray for ourselves in these difficult days shared by so many people but also lived in isolation.

Help us to know your protecting love and to live in the power of your Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer**HYMN - [Love divine all loves excelling](#)****FINAL BLESSING** (by John Wesley)

Now, to God the Father, who first loved us,

and made us accepted in the Beloved;

to God the Son, who loved us,

and washed us from our sins in his own blood;

to God the Holy Spirit, who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts,

be all love and all glory in time and to all eternity.

Amen.

[Alternative sung blessing](#)