



St Leonard's Church
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 Denmark

Anglican Parish of Denmark-Walpole

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St. George's Church
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We endeavour to be an expression of God's love in the community

Thursday, 21 May 2020 - Ascension Day

Dear Parishioners,

I write today on Ascension Day, I think for many, one of the forgotten feast days in the church's calendar! Ascension Day always falls on the Thursday, 40 days after Easter and 10 days before Pentecost Sunday.

While I haven't always been good at observing Ascension Day, it has held a special place in my heart, probably for all the wrong reasons! Whilst at boarding school in the UK, we used to have a holiday (literally a 'holy day') from school. Of course, being a Thursday, us boarders weren't allowed home for the day, so, after a church service, we were piled on to a bus for an excursion to somewhere interesting.

The serious side of this day is of course much deeper and more profound and a mystery!

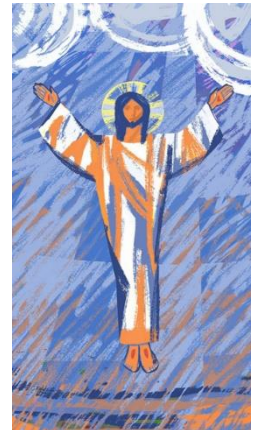
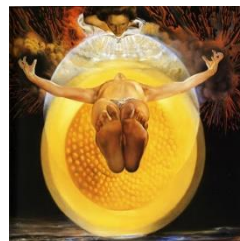
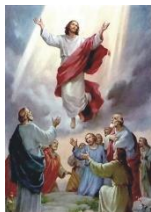
We find the account of the Jesus' ascension in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

verse 9: "When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."

Scholars, theologians and preachers down the centuries have tried to explain and rationalise what happened, and generally, if people of faith have thought about it, we have been caught up in trying to work out what happened or how it happened, rather than what it meant.

Jesus in John's gospel talks about leaving them, going back to the Father and that he is leaving so that the Holy Spirit can come, and through the Holy Spirit, those who believe in him will be empowered.

Through the centuries, artists have had a field day trying to visualise this:



I remember having a very strange experience in a chapel at Walsingham where, above the altar, there were just a pair of feet disappearing into the ceiling. I'm afraid it brought out my very irreverent side!

Revd Sue Lodge Calvert, in her blog *Companions on the Way* (companionsontheway.com) reflects upon Ascension Day as an acknowledgement that the Easter season is drawing to an end and Pentecost is on its way. Jesus withdraws from the seen world and then there is the gifting of us ordinary ones with the Spirit. First there is the ending of the world as we know it and there is the possibility of a new creation. For the first disciples it was a time of anticipation, anxiety and absence – something many of us have been experiencing in living in these times with Coronavirus.

The Collect for Ascension Day:

God of majesty,
you led the Messiah through suffering into risen life,
and took him up into the glory of heaven:
clothe us with the power promised from on high,
and send us forth to the ends of the earth
as heralds of repentance and witnesses of Jesus Christ,
the first born from the dead,
who lives with you now and always
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.

For me, this week has been a difficult one, with the news last Friday of the death of a former parishioner from Esperance in a tragic head on car accident. I got to know the couple, preparing them for marriage, then officiating at their wedding, baptising the first two of their four children, experiencing their joy and love in finding each other and building a life together. I will be returning, briefly, to Esperance on Wednesday to be involved in Thursday's funeral. I will be back Friday. Please pray for Chelsea and her four young children, as well as the wider family as they mourn William's unexpected death, and please pray for me, for travelling mercies and for words to express hope amidst such deep sadness.

I am aware of a number of people in the parish experiencing grief at the moment, some as the result of sudden tragic accidents, others as the outcome of illness. Please be gentle with yourself and remember that grief is a natural and important part of the life experience.

On a brighter and more positive note, the MS Committee have announced that the Denmark *Mustard Seed* will reopen on Monday, May 25th. I am not sure as yet on how many days or hours they will be open, but they have managed to get their paper work in place for the Government and Diocesan regulations as well as the hygiene and social distancing rules worked out. We have several Vollies who are keen to get back to work, I thank them for their enthusiasm and industriousness in readying the shop for opening.

Walpole are working on their 'COVID Safety Plan' for a May 31st opening of St George's.

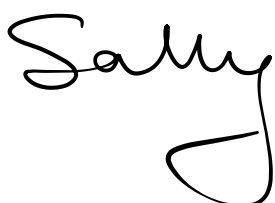
I close this week's letter with this prayer, close to my Franciscan heart. It is often attributed to St Francis but is thought to have originated in a French religious community early in the twentieth century. It seems very appropriate to our current times:

Lord make us channels of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master,
grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Stay safe and keep well.

With my prayer and good wishes, your priest and your friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, looped initial 'S' and a long, sweeping tail that ends in a small hook.