

Ascension Day
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*This liturgy may be used at home or in small groups. Feel free to adapt it as you see fit. Children present might enjoy lighting candles, reading scriptures and leading some of the prayers. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

Preparation

Light a candle as you read “God placed all things under Christ’s rule. He appointed him to be ruler over everything.” (*Eph. 1:22*)

Call to Worship

Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.
How awesome is the LORD Most High,
the great King over all the earth!
God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.
Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth;
sing to him a psalm of praise.
(Ps 47:1-2,6-7)

Opening Prayer¹

Ascended and reigning Christ,
help all of us who struggle to worship
you as Lord
perceive the beauty and glory of your
sovereign rule.
Help all of us who struggle to worship
you as heavenly priest
discover the beauty and power of your
ongoing prayer for us and with us.
Amen.

Confession

While we claim to celebrate the ascension
of our Lord,
the way we live proclaims our lack of faith
in his power to deal with the world.
Let us confess the incongruity between our
faith and practice.

We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to
confess our lack of trust.
While we sing of your lordship over all
creation,

we have too often acted as though you
are powerless
in the face of today’s events.
Help us to live with confidence in your
presence today
and in hope for life with you forever.
Amen.

Silence

Hear the Good News: In Christ, by God’s
grace, we are saved. **Amen.**

Scripture

Ephesians 1:15–23
Luke 24:44–53

Collect

Almighty and everlasting Father,
You raised our Lord Jesus Christ
To your right hand on high.
As we rejoice in his exaltation,
Fill us with his Spirit,
That we may go into all the world
And faithfully proclaim the gospel.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who is alive and reigns with you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Reflection

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

Unity Prayer²

God of steadfast love and compassion,
you call us and send us to proclaim good
news to all;
help us to show unusual kindness to all in
distress,
by sharing the Good News of your death
and resurrection,
by encouraging all to follow the new life you
offer,
and by assuring them that you will be with
them always;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit,

¹ Prayer from the Worship Source Book.

² A prayer from the Church Unity Commission.

one God in glory everlasting.
Amen

**the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with
us all, now and forever more. Amen**

For the extension of Christ's Kingdom

King of all and master of our lives, entering
into your glory by your cross, to whom is
given all authority both in heaven and earth:

Come Lord Christ and enter into your
Kingdom; subdue the world by the power of
your love and be known and adored to all
the ends of the earth.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Lord and Heavenly Father, renew in me the
gifts of the Holy Spirit; increase my faith,
strengthen my hope, enlighten my
understanding, enlarge my love, and make
me ever ready to serve you in body and soul
after the example of your Son, Jesus Christ,
our Lord.

Dedication

I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole
heart. My whole heart I lay upon the altar of
your praise. Let the flame of your love set
my whole heart on fire; that nothing in me
may be left to me but may I wholly burn
towards you, wholly be on fire towards you,
wholly love you as though set on fire
towards you, wholly love you as though set
afire by you (St. Augustine)

Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

**And now may the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and
Eyes to see Jesus who is Ruler over all things**

Jesus Christ is Lord! That's the original Christian Creed. Over time the Church
developed the Nicene and Apostles' Creed to summarise the story of our faith.

But at the centre of these creeds is the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord. This reflection expounds on Paul's wonderful prayer that we would know the power of Christ's Lordship (Eph. 1:15-23).

Introduction³

School outings are exciting. I was certainly excited about our biology class day trip to see the electron microscopes at the Life Sciences department of the University of Natal; I don't think I was excited about the microscope though. That soon changed. Even the most disinterested of us were soon in awe as the mysterious wonders of nature were revealed to us.

First up a "scanning" electron microscope revealed the compound eye of a fly - like something out a science fiction movie. Then the huge transmission electron microscope showed details of a single virus. Think about it; the Corona virus is about 120nm in diameter. The diameter of a human hair is around 100 000nm. 833 corona viruses could line up-side by side on the width of a human hair! The electron microscope gives power to see & understand things that are otherwise hidden.

Eyes to see

In Eph. 1:15ff Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be opened to see things as they really are. The most important thing to see is that Jesus Christ has ascended to the right hand of God where he reigns as King. When we see Jesus kingship clearly, we are able to see that rival "principalities & powers", as Paul calls them, may strut about, may cause damage, but they are have no real lasting true power..

The power Paul prays for is not simply to know about this reality. But to know Jesus, the King, as our Lord in a personal way. To know the power of His Lordship in our lives.

Powerlessness

We are so much more aware, lately, of our powerlessness and fragility. A tiny virus seems to have taken over the world. We feel powerless over Government decisions. We feel powerless over what happens to the economy. We feel powerless about our future.

But Jesus is not surprised. Jesus is not anxious. Jesus reigns and he will lead the world into God's plan and purpose. He will guide us.

Power

Jesus' power is, of course, quite unlike the power we are used to in the world. Paul, remember, is writing from a jail cell as a prisoner of the seemingly all-powerful Roman empire. And God's doesn't enable him to "overpower" his

³ Tom Wright's commentary on this passage where he talks of a telescope, reminded me of this experience. in (Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon)

captors. But neither could Paul's captors oppress his love, faith and joy. And God's word to Paul could not be locked up – 1000's of years later his letter continues to inspire.

We are not given power over and above others to compete and dominate. In fact, very often, Christians are persecuted and mistreated. But, in our weakness, we carry the power of God:

The power to be gentle when others are aggressive and rude. Power to be forgiving when others are vengeful. Power to pray in hope when others are giving up. The power to know peace when others are fearful. Power to trust in God's faithfulness. Power to be kind in a cruel world. God's power often works in hidden, mysterious ways deep the human heart.

That's why Paul later says *"I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1–3).."*

Unity is indeed one of main themes in our Ascension Day prayers...for God's is able to reconcile people to God and to one another.

When we ponder the power of God and how we should best respond we realise our we need help to see more clearly. We realise that, in Christ, we are not so powerless as we feared. We need help to receive God's power and to partner with God's power. That is exactly what Spirit does. Because God's power is always the power of grace – that power that saves us, transforms us and equips us for the work God has called us to do.

Amen.