

# starters for Sunday

## **Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**1 June 2014**

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Fraser Stewart, Minister of Kilmuir and Logie Easter, for his thoughts on the seventh Sunday of Easter.

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## Quick Guide...

*Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.*

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

### [Acts 1: 6 - 14](#)

Acts 1: 3 mentions the Ascension as 40 days after the Resurrection. Numbers are important too in the last part of the chapter with a new twelfth disciple being chosen. The disciples seem to have learned little! They still imagine the kingdom as for Israel alone. In verse 8 Jesus tells of the journey they will make locally, yes, but then to the ends of the earth.

The Acts of the Apostles is of course a book of movement, a story of journeys. It is always helpful to have a map to chart where everyone is going or has been.

The personal journey that many were to make must have been great with a dawning realisation that the challenge Jesus had given them would mean a life of sacrifice and service. We often say Pentecost is the birthday of the Church but Ascension marks the start of the mission of the Church as Jesus talks of a mission to the whole world.

Like so many of the mountain top experiences the believers have to return to the reality of life, there in the world to carry out the commands of Jesus.

### [Psalm 68: 1 - 10, 32 - 35](#)

Some translations do not capture the great sense of praise and a triumphant procession in this long psalm. It starts with the words said as the ark sets out on all its journeys (see Numbers 10: 35) “Let God arise...”

The final verses of the psalm underline the majesty of God and, importantly for us on this Sunday after Ascension, his rule over the whole earth.

### [Isaiah 45: 1 - 7](#)

A slightly shocking passage for Israel:- a commission given to a non-Jewish King! God even works through those who don't know him (v4).



Here we have the hint, confirmed by the coming of Jesus, that the God of Israel is in fact the God of all.

### [Psalm 21: 1 - 7](#)

The psalmist outlines the grace and glory given by God to the king. The king has won a victory but it is God who has given it to him. In v4 it seems rather an exaggeration to talk of an earthly king ruling for ever.

### [1 Peter 4: 12 - 14, 5: 6 - 11](#)

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with persecution and suffering. The Jews had long known persecution but to a Gentile convert this may have come as a surprise. It is always difficult to get over the good news then say “by the way it won’t be easy.”

The writer prepares his readers for persecution and probably has first-hand experience of it. The church is urged to live faithfully and see persecution as a sign that the work of God is being done. It is easy to be glib about this but many who have experienced difficulty and suffering will be witness to this.

### [John 17: 1 - 11](#)

John does not have an Ascension story but chapter 17 is very much a marking of an end to one venture and the beginning of another.

There are echoes of the Lord’s prayer in this farewell discourse.

The unity of Jesus with his heavenly Father is affirmed. Jesus speaks as though he had already left the world. He sees the challenges ahead for his disciples and prays for them as they continue his mission in the world

In verse 11 the call for them “to be one” gives hints of the divisions that the gospel writer was beginning to see in the early church.



## Preaching Ideas

A) A fellow student once said of a noted professor ‘if you write down his prayer at the start of the lecture you’ll get the gist of what the lecture is about’ So why not use the collect for the Ascension( see below) as a framework for a three point sermon? Perhaps...

- 1 Ascension to the heavens
- 2 A Christlike Church
- 3 A constant presence.

B) Or thinking of the movement of the story in Acts 1: 6 - 14

Looking upwards,

Heading downwards,

Setting outwards.

This is an opportunity to reflect on the mission imperative of the church, the dangers of the church looking inward and the strength we gain from a saviour now in the heavens who equips us for service.

C) “And to the ends of the earth”

How many times have you preached about the Ascension? It is a challenging story but also one that gives us great hope, particularly in the light of John 17. So too the challenge of the messengers –“men of Galilee why do you stand looking into the sky?” (v11a) - could be seen as a call to action for all disciples. It is perhaps a daunting challenge to the disciples as they have known great loss and then the amazing resurrection experiences. Now this! What do they make of it and how do they react? Luke tells of Jesus saying “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This to be after the gift of God’s Holy Spirit.



## Prayers

### Collect

Almighty God,  
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ  
ascended far above all heavens  
that he might fill all things.  
Grant that your Church on earth  
may be filled with his presence  
and that he may remain with us always,  
to the end of the world;  
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Prayers for Ascension

Risen Christ,  
glorious you now ascend into heaven,  
there to take your seat  
and be acclaimed by angels.  
In vain we seek to imagine  
the heights to which you aspire.  
Higher than high,  
further than our most perceptive thoughts,  
closer to God than our best imagining,  
you reign, celestial, and supreme.  
Yet here on earth,  
your footprints are still seen  
and your words are still warm.



Hallowed be your name in heaven  
and followed be your way on earth. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have ascended  
beyond horizons which our eyes can see,  
and further than the limits  
which our minds can reach.

No longer restricted to one place,  
you are seated on the throne of heaven,  
and present in all places.

We praise you,  
our glorious Lord and Saviour,  
and are for ever glad  
that now there is in heaven  
one who understands and intercedes for us.

Hallowed be your name!  
hallowed on earth as now in heaven. Amen.

Almighty God,  
in sorrow you saw your Son crucified,  
but with deeper joy  
saw him raised from the dead.  
And now we celebrate his return to heaven,  
to his Father's embrace  
and the acclamation of the angels.

Grant that we may learn to suffer as he did,  
that we may also experience resurrection,  
and finally be received in heaven by him,



with you and the Holy Spirit,  
to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Blessing and honour and glory and power!  
Our words echo the praise of heaven  
as you, Jesus Christ,  
rise above the limitations of earth,  
to sit for ever on the right hand side of God.

Though now we cannot ascend  
to where you are,  
still raise our hopes and hearts,  
that our discipleship in this world  
may be touched with the glory of heaven,  
and our lives be signs and promises  
of the fullness of the life to come. Amen.



## Time with Children

**The right direction:** The old stand-by of the compass giving the right direction (doesn't work too well if you are beside a Victorian radiator).

## The Ends of the Earth

On a large map show where missionary partners are, perhaps churches folk have visited. See how many countries your congregation have links with or people have worshipped in.

## The end of the earth

The shipping forecast used to have an area off the west coast of Europe called Finisterre - the end of the earth - now called FitzRoy. Talk of voyages of discovery such as Christopher Columbus.

The story of Jesus was spread by people who moved and travelled. Do you have a local saint who brought the good news to your area?

## Musical suggestions

CH4 18	The earth belongs to God alone
CH4 283	The voice of God goes out to all the world (tune 286 Woodlands)
CH4 438	The head that once was crowned with thorns
CH4 259	Beauty for brokenness
CH4 457	All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
CH4 562	Through the love of God our Saviour
CH4 436	Christ triumphant, ever reigning
CH4 792	Our God is a God who makes friends



## Additional Resources

### Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

### Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Pray Now 2013](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#). [Revealing Love](#) will be available to purchase from November 2013.



### Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music magazine [Different Voices](#).

### Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

### Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Worship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

*The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Fraser Stewart for providing us with this Sunday's material.*

*Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.*

