7th. SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
(SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION) 10am.

Because Jesus ascended and sits at the right hand of God, a new world has broken into ours. Justice will come for the poor, freedom for the prisoners, healing for the sick. A new community has been formed. Love and caring will flourish, the abandoned and rejected will be welcomed. All people will find a place of belonging. A new creation has begun. All that was distorted is being restored, all that was corrupted is being renewed, all that was broken is being made whole. God's new world has begun! *(Christine Sine)*

CONFESSION. Forgive us, Lord, when we are afraid and do not put our trust in you, when we are divided, and find it hard to forgive others, when we fail to reflect your glory in our thoughts and deeds.
Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

COLLECT. O God, the KIng of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven; we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.
READINGS. PSALM 68: 1-10, 32-end.
ACTS 1:6-14, JOHN 17:1-11.

REFLECTION. Think of what the followers of Jesus have been through. There is the arrest and the horror of the crucifixion leaving them full of fear, of guilt and great confusion. Has it all been for nothing? Then come tales from some of the women insisting that they have seen Jesus alive! Can this really be true? As the risen Jesus makes himself known to them, they settle into a new normality. Jesus is back; he's talking and teaching. He is listening and answering their questions. At last, they think, at last Jesus will establish a new rule in Israel and be its King.

Suddenly they realize that Jesus is not staying and that it is their job to carry on his work without him. Jesus has commissioned them to do a seemingly daunting job. Imagine them as they drag themselves back to Jerusalem. Now they must wait for whatever it is Jesus has promised to send them, to help them. They must wait for the Holy Spirit.
In today's Gospel, Jesus is praying for his friends. He knows that they will feel abandoned after the ascension. He asks for protection for them. Protection that his followers, and that includes us, will be one. Christians , in their unity, will live out the loving unity of God.
Here we are, many years after the event. We find ourselves waiting and fearful. May we put ourselves in God's hands and look to Christ Jesus, hearing his word afresh. 'Holy Father, protect them in your name'. Amen.

PRAYERS.
Risen, ascended Lord, you send us into the world in your service; protect us from the evil one and sanctify us in your truth. We pray for your church here on earth; heal our divisions that we may be one, reflecting your love.
We pray for those who are sick in mind, body or spirit, those affected by coronavirus and those who are in pain or distress because of treatment delays, those whose jobs are at risk, those facing economic hardship.
We give thanks for our communities, for the many acts of generosity, for those working selflessly in the caring professions and for all who do essential work in the service of others.
Above all, we give thanks for your generous love, that empowers and protects us.
THE LORD'S PRAYER (your chosen version)
WE SHARE THE GRACE.
FINAL PRAYER.
You are not only risen and alive, you are Lord. This is your ascension, your ascendency over the whole universe. You stand over and above all that is best in life as its source, above all that is worst as its victor. You stand above all powers and authorities as judge, above all failures and weaknesses as forgiveness and love. You alone are worthy of total allegiance, total commitment. You are Lord, my Lord and my God. *(Rex Chapman).*