



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

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## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 12 May 2024 – Easter 7

The service this morning is led by Kimberley Nielsen,  
one of our Lay Preachers

### **Welcome to our service this morning.**

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

***Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice,  
Sustainability.***

**Sustainability: we care for and strive to restore the integrity of the Earth and all of creation.**

*We invite you to:*

*Join in the congregational responses printed in **Bold**.  
Stand if you are able, for the hymns and the offering prayer*

## **Welcome**

Kia ora, happy Mother's Day, and welcome to what is hopefully our last service here in the Kaurihohore Hall. All going to plan, the painters will finish up this week, and we will be having a stripped-back service in the church next Sunday, with the official moving back in happening the following week.

Today is a special day in the church calendar – Ascension Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus ascending to heaven, taking his place at the right hand of the Father, to be our high priest, interceding on our behalf in the heavenly holy of holies. As Richard Rohr calls it, 'the time when Jesus the man became Jesus the Christ'. It is a time to celebrate!

## **Call to Worship**

Each of you brings very different feelings to this service.

**Some of us are full of joy; some of us are troubled.**

You come from different backgrounds.

**Some of us work with our hands and minds; some work with our hearts and minds. Some of us live with other family members; some of us are on our own.**

You bring some very different expectations to this service.

**Some of us want to hear more of God's Word; some of us want only to sing God's praise.**

You have many differences.

**We have, but we are one in Jesus Christ.**

## **Opening Prayer**

Testify! Tell the world what God has done!

**God has created our world and has given us lakes and mountains, stars and wonder as we look up at the night sky.**

Testify, for God has given us more!

**God has given each of us life and breath, and has put us in families and among friends.**

Testify, for God has been faithful!

**God has given us the ancient leaders and the prophets, has spoken through the scriptures, and has formed the faith community.**

Testify, for God has held nothing back!

**God has sent Jesus Christ for us and for all people. In Christ's birth, God's care was made clear; in his baptism, God's vocation was revealed; and in his death on the cross, we understand just how far God will go.**

### **Hymn – Our Eyes Have Seen The Glory**

*(Complete Mission Praise, 549)*

1. Our eyes have seen the glory  
of our Saviour, Christ the Lord;  
He is seated at His Father's side  
in love and full accord;  
from there upon the waiting  
church  
His Spirit is out-poured  
all hail, ascended King!

*Glory, glory, hallelujah,  
glory, glory, hallelujah,  
glory, glory, hallelujah,  
all hail, ascended King!*

2. He came to earth at Christmas  
and was made a man like us;  
He taught, He healed, He suffered  
and they nailed Him to the cross;  
He rose again on Easter Day –  
our Lord victorious,  
all hail, ascended King!

*Glory, glory, hallelujah, .....*

3. The good news of His kingdom  
must be preached to every shore,  
the news of peace and pardon,  
and the end of strife and war;  
the secret of His kingdom  
is to serve Him evermore,  
all hail, ascended King!

*Glory, glory, hallelujah, .....*

4. His kingdom is a family  
of folk of every race,  
they live their lives in harmony,  
enabled by His grace;  
they follow His example  
till they see Him face to face,  
all hail, ascended King!

*Glory, glory, hallelujah, .....*

## **Prayer of Dedication**

In a world where many are dedicated to attaining power over others,

**We dedicate ourselves to peace and to the support of the downtrodden.**

In a church where many find it easier to keep the traditional ways,

**We dedicate ourselves to fresh expressions of worship and to innovative ways of service.**

In a friendship circle where many experience relationships on a superficial level,

**We dedicate ourselves to listening carefully and to going the extra mile.**

In our families where it is difficult to keep priorities straight in a fast-moving world,

**We dedicate ourselves to taking time for each family member and to enjoying the moment with them.**

*Time of reflection...*

## **Words of Assurance**

To get our feelings sorted out, to get our relationships in harmony and our actions right, we need to rededicate ourselves to you, O God.

**Through our prayers, through the inspiration of scripture, and through the guidance of your saints of today, we will become your renewed and faithful people.**

And God will bless your endeavours and grant you peace.

**Thanks be to God! Amen**

## **Reading – Acts 1:1-11 (CEB)**

## **Hymn: O Christ When You Ascended**

*[\(Tune: Aurelia\)](#)*

1. O Christ, when you ascended, you took your rightful throne;  
Your time on earth had ended — yet we weren't left alone.  
You reign o'er earth and heaven; your Spirit guides our way.  
Your prayers uphold your people; you lead your church each day.

2. We look at earthly rulers and see what they command:  
We note their years of power, the borders of their land.  
Yet, Lord, you are not bounded by things like time and space;  
Your reign is never-ending, you rule in every place.

3. We're tempted. Lord, to leave you in stories nicely told;  
Sometimes we don't believe you and say your ways are old.  
Sometimes we feel so lonely and live in doubt and fear —  
But your ascension means, Lord, you're present with us here.

4. It's often quite a challenge to follow in your Way;  
We're easily distracted! It's hard, Lord, to obey.  
Sometimes we give you Sundays — an hour, maybe two —  
But your ascension means, Lord, all life belongs to you.

5. One day, O Lord, we'll know you, as we are fully known;  
One day this world of sinners will bow before your throne.  
One day, God's whole creation will sing and praise your name;  
On earth as now in heaven, we'll celebrate your reign.

[https://www.carolynshymns.com/o\\_christ\\_when\\_you\\_ascended.html](https://www.carolynshymns.com/o_christ_when_you_ascended.html)

## **Sermon**

How do you pass the time while you're waiting for something?  
During our family road trip to the South Island over the summer,  
one of our favourite things to do while we were waiting was to play  
fortunately/unfortunately. Basically. You tell a story together, taking  
alternating turns to begin your part of the story with “fortunately” or  
“unfortunately”. In some ways, the life of Jesus and his ministry

here on earth sometimes seems a bit like a fortunately/  
unfortunately story.

There once was a man named Jesus.

Fortunately, Jesus was God's son.

Unfortunately, people didn't like hearing him say that.

Fortunately, Jesus showed great love for people, especially those who were different and outcast by society.

Unfortunately, there were people who didn't like that either.

Fortunately, Jesus performed miracles and healings, and shared wisdom with his followers.

Unfortunately, some people decided to kill Jesus.

Fortunately, Jesus didn't let this stop his ministry.

Unfortunately, the people who didn't like Jesus succeeded in having him killed.

Fortunately, Jesus was resurrected after 3 days. He spent more time with his disciples, teaching them and sharing meals with them.

Unfortunately for Jesus' Jewish followers, Jesus didn't return to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

Fortunately, God was going to send Jesus' followers a gift – the Holy Spirit!

Unfortunately, it was time for Jesus to say goodbye.

Fortunately, Jesus's followers now had a job to do – be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Unfortunately, they had to wait first for the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

Which leads me to our reading this morning. As you probably know, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts share the same author, Luke, and are written to the same person, Theophilus. As we see in our readings today, Acts picks up almost exactly where Luke finishes off.

Some scholars suggest that, rather than traditionally being called 'The Acts of the Apostles', the book of Acts should instead be called "The Acts of Jesus", "The Acts of the Risen Christ", or "The Acts of the Holy Spirit". There is also an argument that Luke's Gospel is a sequel in that it is a continuation and fulfilment of God's

promises as contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament. For Luke, Acts is simply the next instalment of the ongoing drama of God's loving and saving activity in the world.

Luke narrates the ascension of Jesus twice – the first time at the end of his gospel, and again, with slightly more detail, at the beginning of Acts. It can feel a bit repetitive reading these two narratives one immediately following the other, but remember that while early readers of Luke's work may have been familiar with the gospel, it is unlikely that they had the two books just sitting there ready to be read at any moment, so I like to think of the beginning of Acts is the ancient equivalent of when a TV show begins "previously on...."

So, Jesus has died and risen back from the dead. He's visited the women, those guys walking home to Emmaus, and finally the disciples where they hear further teachings from Jesus, and shared meals together. There is no doubt in the mind of Jesus' followers that he has been resurrected and so they figure that NOW must be the time that Jesus is going to do the things they've been waiting from him to do. Now is the time that the Kingdom of Israel will be restored. Theologian Craig Keener says that this is the most natural question for the disciples to ask Jesus at this time, given he had been talking about the "Kingdom", and references to the outpouring of the spirit in the Jewish scriptures were all in the context of Israel's restoration.

From our reading today, we see that, once again, God does not always behave in the way that we expect, or want, him to. The disciples were hoping that the resurrected Jesus would restore the Kingdom of Israel, instead he tells them that now is not that time, in fact, they're never going to know when that time is. Instead, they will receive a gift: the power of the Holy Spirit; and a job: to be witnesses in "Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth". But in the meantime, they have to wait for what God has promised.

This waiting is not meant to be sitting around doing nothing – in Acts we read that two men in white, presumably angels, appear after Jesus disappears from sight, saying essentially "move along, nothing to see here". And in Luke's gospel we read that the

disciples returned to the temple in Jerusalem “overwhelmed with joy. And they were continuously in the temple praising God.” Our waiting needs to be more than passive waiting. It involves praise for what we have witnessed, what we know of God to be true, but also the acting out of God’s great love towards us, sharing that same love with those who are yet to experience it.

As a church we have decided to hold off entering the stationing process to appoint a new minister after Freddy’s departure early next year. In doing this, we are actively choosing a season of waiting. Just as the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, we too wait for God’s guidance on what this next season look like for us as a church.

F. Scott Spencer reminds us, “the Acts of the Apostles begins with Christ’s order for his apostles not to act until they’re properly equipped. Which is not to encourage passivity or complacency: they must wait for the Spirit intentionally, diligently, prayerfully, communally.”<sup>1</sup> Just like the disciples, we too must wait intentionally, diligently, prayerfully, and communally as we discern what God has in store for this next season in the life of our church.

“Acts reminds us that the God of all time acts on God’s own time, and sometimes we just need to wait, sit, and be. While we wait, Acts reminds us not to assume we already know what we’re waiting for. When Jesus returns to the disciples as promised, they essentially ask, “We already know what you’re going to do. When will you do it?” The people of God have a long tradition, continuing today, of believing we can predict God’s next steps.”<sup>2</sup>

What does waiting well look like? I would like to suggest that we as a congregation engage in regular practices of holy imagination where we allow ourselves to dream of what the future might like look for our church. You might like to engage in this practice while you brush your teeth, have a shower, wash the dishes, or hang the washing on the line. Begin by asking God what plans God has for our church, then allow your imagination to run wild.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ascension-of-our-lord/commentary-on-acts-11-11-9>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ascension-of-our-lord/commentary-on-acts-11-11-5>



As a worship team, we're seeking God on how to best plan and implement our church services once we're no longer alternating with a minister. We experimented with some ideas during the summer sampler series, but this is an ongoing process for us of waiting and seeking, trying and reflecting.

There is a time to wait and seek God, but there will also be a time when it is time to act. If we spend our waiting time seeking God, it will be obvious when the time to act has come, and what we need to do. Whether we are waiting or acting, we must be Jesus' witnesses – what does this mean?

Strong's concordance tells us that the word "witness" in this passage can have 3 different meanings: It can be legal, like a witness testifying in court; it can be historical, like being a spectator of an event; or it can be ethical, following after the example of Jesus, including, but obviously not always, martyrdom (in the original Greek, this word for witnesses is also the root word that gives us the word "martyr").

What as a congregation have we borne witness to? You might remember that a couple of years ago we considered questions such as, how has the Holy Spirit led our church in the past? And, where do you see the Holy Spirit active in our church? These were some of the responses:

- Development of the Uniting Church of Whangarei, which brought various denominations together onto one.
- The move from St Paul's to Kauri, which injected new life into our church.
- The decision in the 1980's to become inclusive of all peoples.
- We have survived as a church, despite low congregation numbers and occasional deficit budgets.
- A strong sense of belonging and togetherness within our membership.
- Through organising events that bring our community together – Christmas carol service, ANZAC service, Monday markets, Girls Brigade, etc.

It is important to remember that our witness as Jesus followers goes beyond just what we observe, experience, or preach, to how we live the gospel – our witness includes how we love – our love for people, for truth, for fairness, and for justice.

My Acts commentary<sup>3</sup> encourages us by saying, “Note that the Lord does not say ‘you must become witnesses’, or ‘you must convert people’, but ‘you will be my witnesses’. This is an encouraging certainty; the believer filled with the spirit is a witness; he does not need to strive or struggle to be a witness. There will be hardships and opposition and a need for diligence, but it will happen.”

Admittedly there will be times when our waiting process will feel a bit like a game of fortunately/unfortunately. But ultimately, we know that if we use our time well and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, our story will always end on a fortunately.

May we wait patiently, diligently and creatively, as we wait upon the Holy Spirit for guidance in this next season of our church’s story. All the while, bearing witness to the love of God as seen in the life of Jesus and reflected in our lives too. Amen.

**Hymn – Come O Long Expected Jesus**      (HFTC 52)  
([Tune = Hyfrodol](#))

1. Come, O long-expected Jesus,  
born to set your people free!  
from our fears and sins release us,  
Christ in whom our rest shall be.

2. Israel’s strength and consolation,  
born salvation to impart;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

3. Born your people to deliver,  
born a child, and yet a king;  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now your gracious kingdom bring:

4. By your own eternal Spirit  
rule in our hearts alone;  
by your all-sufficient merit  
raise us to your glorious throne.

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<sup>3</sup> Asia Bible Commentary Series: Acts, by W. Robert Slade and Bruce J. Nicholls

## **Offering Dedication**

Children of the living God, with your gifts come responsibilities.

**We acknowledge that, and we will take responsibility. We will compassionately care for the troubled and the sick within this faith community. We will vision courageously. We will be alert to neighbourhood needs. We will give generously for the needs of our mission fund.**

In your caring, in your outreach, in your looking to the future, and in your zest for mission, your gifts will be blessed. **Amen.**

## **Prayers of the People**

Holy One, we gather in your presence to give you thanks and to celebrate the gift of your love; a love that supports, nurtures and challenges us in ways that strengthen and transform us. We offer you praise and thanksgiving for your unfailing presence in our lives and all of the blessings that you so generously offer us.

Today, as we celebrate Mother's Day, we give thanks for mothers the world over. We give thanks for all those who have nurtured and care for us, remembering especially, birth mothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, neighbours and all women who have shared their faith with us.

We pray, compassionate God, for those mothers who have been hurt, disillusioned, or disappointed in their role as mother. We pray for those who have been denied a longed-for chance at motherhood, and for those who grieve the loss of a child.

We lift up before you, O God, the members of our human family around the world—for those who are afflicted or suffering at this time—for those who need healing, for those who require bread or shelter, for those who live in violent homes and communities, for those who are grieving, and for those whose needs are known to you alone.

*We remember:*

Holy Mother and Father of us all, touch us with your healing peace and gentle embrace that we may walk in your ways bringing dignity, justice and peace to all corners of your world. All of this we pray in the strong name of Jesus.

Amen.

### Hymn – He Came Singing Love

*(Alleluia Aotearoa 59)*

1. He came singing Love  
and he lived singing love;  
he died, singing love  
He arose in silence.  
For the love to go on  
we must make it our song;  
you and I be the singers.

3. He came singing hope  
and he lived singing hope;  
he died, singing hope.  
He arose in silence.  
For the hope to go on  
we must make it our song;  
you and I be the singers.

2. He came singing faith  
and he lived singing faith;  
he died, singing faith.  
He arose in silence.  
For the faith to go on  
we must make it our song;  
you and I be the singers.

4. He came singing peace  
and he lived singing peace;  
he died, singing peace.  
He arose in silence.  
For the peace to go on  
we must make it our song;  
you and I be the singers.

### Blessing

People of God,  
we are sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit, to be God's witnesses;  
to proclaim the Good News to everyone we meet,  
to share the love that God has lavished on us in Jesus Christ.  
So go from here in the power and strength of God,  
to bear witness to all you have seen and experienced.

**Sung Amen x3**