Good morning. It’s good to be back in this space, preaching to people in the same room. Today we are celebrating the day of Christ’s Ascension. I chose these readings for our first day back together at St. David’s in over a year because they fit so beautifully. They fit beautifully with the gathering of a community of witnesses who have witnessed a worldwide pandemic, the loss of millions of our fellow brethren, the loss of being in each others’ presence for over a year. Through all this we remain witnesses to Christ death, resurrection and now ascension to heaven. Jesus knew that these things were going to happen in his life. He knew what he would have to experience and he still chose to go through all of this for us. His example during his time here on earth of showing how to reach out and serve our communities, teaching us how relate to one another and how to spread God’s love outside our false boundaries remains with us today. He told the disciples present at the ascension that they were to remain in Jerusalem. They were to pray and wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit which we now know was to come in 10 days time. Next week we celebrate this event by wearing red and acknowledging the Holy Spirit working among us. But today we are the ones waiting, praying, discerning where the Holy Spirit is calling us to serve next. I’ve acknowledged many times this past year that although you’ve been cautious and safe and are now vaccinated you have also remained attentive to where the spirit is calling. You have not taken this year of isolation to wallow in your own sorrows and suffering. You have been serving the community in all the ways you can by providing food, through pop ups, backpacks, supporting our friends in the trailer park and donating to St Vincent’s. Now as we gather together like the disciples to regroup and listen to how and where the Holy Spirit calls us next, I think there is a sense of not only responsibility to do God’s work in this community but excitement at the unmet, unthought of possibilities. Next week, after we celebrate the Day of Pentecost here in our worship, we begin a new program called Creation Care. The goal of these events is to teach children and adults how to care for creation. We hope to develop habits that teach us not to continue to be a throw away culture but to reuse, recycle and transform materials in our daily lives into things that aren’t just thrown into a landfill to pollute our land, oceans and air. We hope to teach others how to grow their own food, to care for our land, animals and all living things on this earth. To respect this one and only Creation we have been given by the grace of God to not only inhabit but are called to be responsible for and use wisely. We are to be witnesses to Jesus presence here with us. We are called by him to be disciples to carry on the work he began, to love one another, love God, and love ourselves in ways that show that we know that God abides not only with us but with all people and is embedded in creation in ways we don’t yet fully understand. We do this by being the community of Church people here at St. David’s. As members of this particular community we have decided to welcome all peoples. We will find ways to serve our community and to pray for the world, for our country, for Brown County and one another. We know that prayer is not just idle conversation but our way of having relationship with our Creator who knows our every thought. We also know that part of relationship is listening to what God is telling us. God “talks” to us through scripture, by inspiration and revelation of prayer and meditation, and by speaking through each other and hearing God through the wisdom we relay to one another.

I am almost done with a book called Afterlife. In this book the main character, Antonia is constantly called by her community and by the community of her sisters to show up where she is called. Her community is home to migrant workers that are often hunted by the authorities even though they are employed by local towns people to help with their farms and homes. Her sisters demand that she show up to hunt down their missing sister who has some mental health issues. These communities rely on her as one who has been a witness to events through time to help out when needed with her unique gifts and connections. She does both tasks reluctantly at times but is constantly reminded of her deceased husbands’ mantra to let love guide the way. It is a wonderful story of community’s that know how to show up and be witnesses.

By now, you have probably had a chance to read the Pentecost newsletter. Brother William has written a nice account of his trip to the Holy Land a few years ago. The very places where many of the events we read about in the bible occurred. There has been a lot of violence in this area of the world. A lot of religious struggle and hatred of those who profess different beliefs and do not seem to be able to live in the same space or piece of land. This past week there have been conflicts between Israel and Palestine; an age- old conflict that has been seemingly impossible to resolve. I know it’s not a simple task to relinquish hatreds that run deep; but as we have gone from Christmas through Easter, to the Ascension and soon Pentecost there is an ever- expanding view of who is welcome and accepted as people of God. There is also an understanding in today’s readings that we are called to be the people of God and to act as disciples who spread the Good News through our love and actions of God’s presence in this world. William ended his article by saying that on this trip he met wonderful people in Israel and in Palestine and that is what they are; God’s people. William describes meeting Sudanese refugees in Tel Aviv, Palestinians on the West Bank and Zionists. These people are all living together in one small space worshipping God in their own unique ways. They may belong to different churches and temples but they are witnesses too. The task we are given today is to follow in the path that Jesus has laid out before us. We are to see guidance from the Holy Spirit, prayer, scripture and one another. We must continue to seek out people outside our church community to share in our commitment to care for creation, to serve others and work beside those who seek to do the same. I can’t imagine what it was like for those disciples to witness Jesus ascending up to heaven. I understand their desire to know the time and place when Jesus would return or when they would see the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we gain wisdom in expectant waiting. Jesus invites us to be witnesses, to expect the unexpected and to be actively waiting for guidance. This poem by Malcolm Guite is a beautiful word picture of the ascension….

[Ascension](http://audioboo.fm/boos/373594-ascension-day-sonnet)

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place
As earth became a part of Heaven’s story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted
He took us with him to the heart of things
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed .