

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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Newsletter for the 10 days of Ascension, from Thursday 13 May

Dear friends, Rev Tom Ravetz, our regional coordinator wrote the following article last year at the start of Ascension tide. I have adapted it for this year. Ben

When we read the story of Jesus' Ascension in the Book of Acts, there is an element of tragicomedy. After Christ withdraws from their sight into the realm of the clouds, the apostles stand gazing after him. Two angels ask them why they are gazing into heaven, when they could know that Jesus will return in the same way that he has left. Christians have not completely overcome the tendency to look away from the earth, as if Christ had gone far away and we need to follow him into a realm that is quite different to our earthly one. This was strengthened in the fourth century when the strict division between the heavenly and the earthly worlds was made into a dogma. God had created the world out of nothing; the earthly realm stood in utter contrast to the heavenly realm. The world, which until then had been a place where healing forces were sought and found in sacred groves and sanctuaries, was now bereft. Only in churches, built increasingly to draw us up towards the sky, could human beings hope for salvation.

Every time we experience a loss, we are in danger of repeating the mistake of the apostles. By fixing our gaze on what we have had to let go of, we can miss the experience that the one we have lost has become present in a different way. Of course, we need to be realistic about the pain of our loss. Alongside it, however, we can choose to attend to the new relationship with our loved one that wants to begin. Then we may have the surprising experience that they are present to us in a new way. We find ourselves thinking thoughts that are not our own; we feel an impulse to do something which we notice comes not from us but from them.

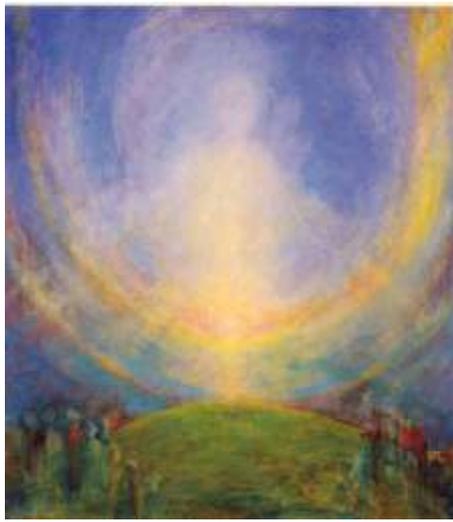
The apostles' response to their loss is to rebuild their community and to listen in prayer. The open ear of their community becomes receptive for the Holy Spirit, who streams in at Whitsun. They find themselves speaking thoughts that come from Christ and performing deeds that come from his impulses for the earth.

The Christian Community was founded on the conviction that the angels' prophecy is coming true: Christ is becoming present to us again out of the hydrosphere, the encircling mantle of the earth that protects its life. Countless human beings have experienced his presence as a source of comfort and healing. Our Act of Consecration was inaugurated as a way of connecting to this renewed presence.

Over the past year we have all experienced loss and separation, loneliness and silence. Now that the restrictions are gradually being lifted it will be important to develop a new openness towards each other.

Can we avoid falling back into old patterns? How do we wish to meet each other? How to speak, how to listen? Perhaps the pain of our separation and silence will allow us to become a truly Pentecostal community, passing on inspiration and giving comfort that we receive from the realm of the spirit.

Tom Ravetz



On Ascension Day, Thursday 13th May the Act of Consecration of Man will be celebrated in Glencraig for the first time in more than a year. Our Hollywood midweek service will therefore now be on Wednesday morning at 10.00, beginning on the 12th of May. On Ascension Sunday, 16th May we will celebrate the sacrament of confirmation for Kai Williams and Amhairghin Metta Doran Shen Ahn in Hollywood. In ordinary times it would have been Tom Ravetz, our regional coordinator, who would celebrate this service with us but with travel restrictions still in place I will be taking the service myself. And in other years we would have invited as many of you as possible to witness this service and welcome these two young people in our midst. But as we are still only allowed to seat 14 people, attendance to the service and the talk on Saturday night will have to be restricted to family and invited guests. But because of this we will change our rhythm of services and have a Whitsun service in Hollywood the following Sunday. That means that we will also have to change the rhythm of our services in Mourne Grange and Clanabogan, there will now be an extra week between services.

Ben van Lieshout

Hollywood

For Sunday services, please ring to book a place as we can only seat 11-13 people.

Wednesday 12 th May	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
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Ascension

Saturday 15 th May	Talk and conversation: " Confirmation; finding Christ in the middle"	19.30
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Sunday 16th May	The Sacrament of Confirmation for Kai Williams and Amhairghin Doran Sim	10.30
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Wednesday 19 th May	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
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Glencraig

Thursday 13 th May	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.45
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Thursday 20 th May	The Act of Consecration of Man	9.15
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Mourne Grange

Saturday 22 nd May	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.15
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	Support Group	11.30
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The gospel for Ascension is John 16: 24-33

Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name. Pray from the heart, and it will be given to your heart, that your joy may be fulfilled.

All this I have given to your souls in imagery. But the hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in pictures, but will tell you openly and unveiled about my Father, so that you can grasp it in full, knowing consciousness. Thus will I proclaim to you the being of the Father. On that day you will ask out of my power and in my name. And no longer will I ask the Father on your behalf. For the Father himself will love you because you have loved me, and have known in your hearts that I have come forth from the Father. I have come forth from the Father and I have come into this world.

I leave the sense world again and return to the world of the Father, of which you say that it is the world of death."

Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking in clear thought and without imagery. Now we know that all things are revealed to you and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

Jesus answered, "Do you now feel my power in your heart? Behold, the time is coming, and has already come, when you will be scattered, each to his own loneliness. You will then also leave me alone. But I am not alone, for the Father is eternally united with me.

All this I have spoken to you so that in me you may find peace. In this world you will have great fear and hardship. But take courage. I have overcome the world."

A homily on John 16: 24-33

In fairy tales, the hero sometimes wins a cloak of invisibility in order to do good. It is as though they enter another realm, just beyond ordinary sight, while still remaining in this one. It is likewise with those who have died; they have entered another realm just beyond our capacity to see them with our ordinary eyes.

In this gospel reading for Ascension, the Ascension event itself is veiled. But there are hints of what is there. Christ says that he is leaving the sense world and entering the realm of the Father, "of which you say that it is the realm of death." John 16:28 Yet with his Resurrection the realm of death was imbued with Life. The dead live, though invisibly, as does He. He indicates however that we will nevertheless be able to sense his presence through other means: we will sense him in praying, when our prayers arise from our hearts. For with his Ascension he expanded his being from that of Jesus to that of both heaven and earth. He has expanded Himself into the whole world. This enables him to be present within the life of every single human being.

We can sense him in the warmth of our blood, in the rhythm of our breathing. He is hidden in the light of our noblest thoughts, in the living changes and transformations of the music of our soul life. He is invisibly present in the very meaning of our lives. He appeared to 'go away'. But his going away was in essence a drawing even nearer. He is hidden within us, in our heart of hearts. Pray from the heart and it will be given to your heart, he says. For I will give you myself, my very being - light, life, warmth and transformation.



John Constable, *Clouds*

A prayer(and song) for Ascension, by Adam Bittleston

The clouds receive
The Risen Christ
That He may rule
The world of life.

Witness of Him
We seek in earth
Where waters bear
The Spirit's grace.

The moving air
And songs of birds
Say in the light
He has a home.

And blossoms feel
The loving flames
He sendeth them
As messengers.

Between men's hearts
Strengthen the love-
O lord of bread,
Giver of wine!

That in the world
Thou fillest now
As Spirit-Sun
We lift our sight!