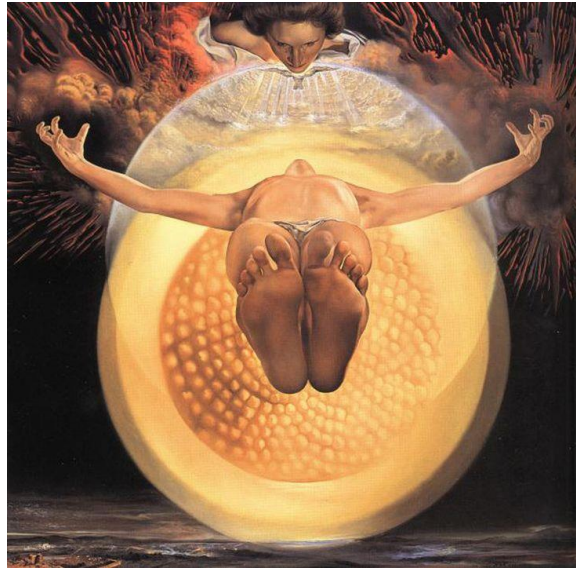


**WESLEY UNITING CHURCH, FORREST, ACT
SUNDAY, MAY 12TH, 2024
9:00am FOYER SERVICE**

**SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION:
“GOD-LIKENESS IN FREEDOM”**



The Ascension of Christ: Salvador Dalí, 1958

Sunday of the Ascension puzzles modern thinking, for its apparent mysticism, although it was never a problem for people prior to the period of modernity. The essence of the Ascension is Jesus' physical return to be with Father. The point of this idea is that physical reality has been accepted and redeemed by God.

In a sense it is the completion of Christmas. At Christmas we celebrate that God enters world history through Jesus the God/man, the divine becomes human, to redeem the human. After Holy Week and Easter, the physically resurrected Jesus reappears and ascends. The salvation cycle is complete, and the human becomes divine. Just as God in Jesus becomes human through the Christmas event, humanity becomes “like God” through the Ascension. The word used for this is *theiosis* (divinization). Summing it up, St Athanasius said this, “God became man so that man might become God.”

This process of *becoming like God as we grow and mature* also involves an ethical understanding of exercising freedom in a way that is consistent with the Christian life. Freedom itself is a challenge which requires self-awareness, self-discipline and an acute consciousness of other and the world in which we live'. Becoming like God is no simple matter. This morning, we are to work on the theme of “Godlike-ness and Freedom”.

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND SAFE CHURCH STATEMENT

Let us acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples,
The first inhabitants of this place,
part of God's good creation.
We honour them for their custodianship of the land,
on which we gather today.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made in the image of God, and so we accept every individual regardless of race, age, creed, sexuality and gender.

EASTER AFFIRMATION

The Lord is risen.

He is risen indeed!

In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
The Lord be with you
And also with you.

LIGHTING THE PASCHAL CANDLE

WELCOMING SONG

Here in this place, new light is streaming,
now in the darkness, vanished away,
see in this space our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of your name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery,
we are the old who yearn for your face,
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in the rich and the haughty;
gather us in the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

Here we will take of the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt of the earth.

Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well and teach us to fashion,
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven light years away,
but in this space the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, now is the day.

Gather us in and hold us forever;
Gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

(TIS 474, Marty Haugen, 1950-)

THE COLLECT

Almighty God,
You raised our Lord Jesus Christ to your right hand on high.
As we rejoice in his exaltation, fill us with his Spirit, that we may go out into the
world and faithfully proclaim his Gospel.

OPENING PRAYERS WOMEN AND THEIR DIGNITY

*(Today is Mother's Day, but women are more than mothers, but people who are
potentially God-like in their entirety, even as they labour against passive and active
discrimination and violence)*

It's not you who should solve our problems, God,
But we yours, God of woman;
Woman made in your image

Woman; child, partner, mother,
 victim of psychological, verbal physical abuse
 living in the shadows,
 living as less under the dictates of the market, religion and politics, living
 as less under the systems that prevail.

Woman made in your image

You dreamed her, God
 walking upright.
 More beautiful than she currently is,
 happier than she dares to be
 freer than any culture allows.

Woman made in your image

Don't stop dreaming her, God.
 I don't want to stop remembering
 That she is your tree,
 planted by the streams
 of living water.

Woman made in your image

CONFESSSION

For young girls as they grow and develop unaware of rules and customs,
 that demean them.

The world is never a 'fair playing field'.

For adolescent girls, who growing into maturity experience the
 pressures of social media to conform to images and expectations. **The
 world in the name of individuality imposes the weight of
 'sameness'.**

For women, pressured to ensure that 'family is perfect'.

Whatever that means.

For women who are on their way to old age, who are considered
 invisible.

Who are not seen or considered.

Forgive us our sins for the coercion that we as part of our society exercise. Amen

Inspired from Dorothee Soelle's poem "Dream Me God", from the German, "Träume Mich, Gott" in *Das Brot der Ermutigung* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 2008),

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

At Easter we are assured that Jesus our brother has overcome death, and so have we.

Thanks be to God!

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-11

¹In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Luke 24:44-53

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord - **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

LET’S WORK TOGETHER AT OUR TABLES FROM OUR WORK-SHEETS!

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

We are asked to pray today for the peoples of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. We continue to pray for the peoples of Gaza, especially Rafah, and Israel.

OFFERING**EUCCHARIST****THE INVITATION****THE STORY****EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER****SANCTUS AND CONSECRATION****PEACE****WE SHARE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST ‘IN THE ROUND’**

LEAVING

LEAVING SONG

And now as you go on your way, take care.

Take care.

The love, all the love that you seek, is there.

Its there.

Love flows through our words and our deeds.

Love knows al the things we need.

Love grows as our hearts are freed
from hatred, fear and pain.

Take care as you go on your way,
until we meet again.

And again.

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Email: amanda@amandaudiskessler.com New hymns: queersacredmusic.com Permission is given
for free use of this song.

BLESSING

Go in peace, and remember:

goodness is stronger than evil;

love is stronger than hate;

light is stronger than darkness;

life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours through Christ who loves us.

Our service has ended.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ

