

Revealing

Gathering

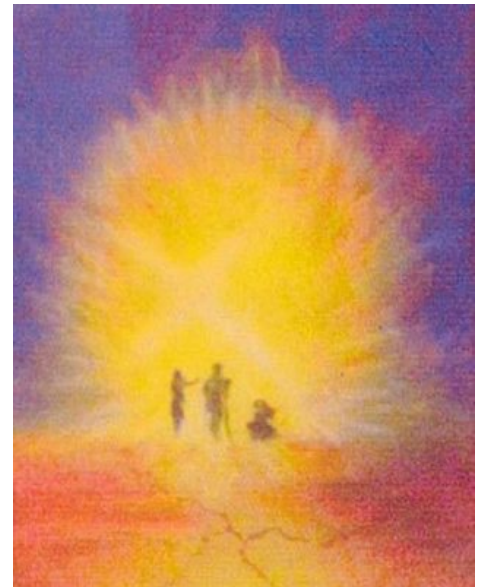
Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **white cloth** or scarf to signify that this is a special “celebration” Sunday. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Introduction

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. The name comes from the time, recorded in each of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, when Jesus took three of his disciples up a mountain to pray and was “transfigured” before their eyes.

In the Harry Potter stories, “Transfiguration” is a branch of magic focussing on the alteration of the form or appearance of an object, by altering the object’s molecular structure. In other words, making something appear to be something that it is not. It was deemed to be very hard work and hard to learn. “I do hope they start right away, there’s so much to learn, I’m particularly interested in Transfiguration, you know, turning something into something else, of course, it’s supposed to be very difficult” - a description of transfiguration from Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone.



In the story of the Gospel, the moment of Transfiguration is the moment not when Jesus is turned into something else (through a change in molecular structure), but on the contrary, it is the moment of revelation when the disciples present, and those who are then told about it, see Jesus for who Jesus truly is, the divine Son of God.

Adapted from Spill The Beans, p.109

Light Candle

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame. We look to Jesus, the light of the world, a light that shines even in the darkest of times offering hope and healing.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples.

From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders, past and present and emerging, and we pray for the future of their communities.

May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler, This land is God’s land and God’s Spirit dwells here

Call to Worship

I want to invite you, then, into an act of transforming the space in which we meet.

Close your eyes.

Breathe in slowly,

find yourself transfigured by the poetry of creation:

the breath

when it is taken away

vacates a moment

leaving it hollowed out

and tissue thin

a place without words

for there are none

to explain

or describe

but because we have no words

does not mean it cannot exist

the moss-skinned stone

the lichen-crusting twig

the water-pooled leaf

fizz

from a brush of heaven

when the moss [glistens]

and the lichen crackles

and the water mesmerises

yet, in the next breath

the world returns to its everyday grandeur

the echo shimmers

and our stiffness cracks

in the residue of wonder

Spill The Beans, Issue 45, Resources for Transfiguration Sunday, 12 February 2023, p.114

Let us pray:

We may not be able to climb a hill for you, O God,

but we gather to worship you in this place.

We may never see you transfigured in glory in our presence,

but we witness to your transforming power in our living.

We may not have the words to explain all that you are,

but we have hearts that want to worship all that you are.

Enable us to meet you in your glory around us,

that we may worship you in truth and love. Amen

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 19 February 2023, p.182

Sing - Gather Us In (TIS 474 - vv1,2,4)

We sing a song of gathering, a song that invites us into the light of Christ that shines amongst us and within us.

"Here in this place, new light is streaming..."

Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is 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 our 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.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven light years away,
but here 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.

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Prayer

Father God,
Mother God,
Parent God,
in you we find our home,
our safe place,
our sustenance.
There is nowhere we can run
that you will not catch us,
no sphere of life
where you are not present,
no shadow that can obscure us from the light of your love.
We are bound to you with chords that cannot be broken.

Even when we turn away
or distance ourselves from you,
your love for us remains unwavering and relentless.
Within that bond of love,
there is nothing we can do that will separate us from your love.

And so, with hearts not able to grasp all that you are,
yet overflowing in gratitude,
we come before you mindful of our faults.
We are sorry for not being true to who we are -
not living up to the potential of our human nature.
When, through our words or actions,
we become a pale reflection of the people we are meant to be - forgive us.
When we take on a reflection of the world, instead of the glory of your image - forgive us.
When we broadcast a vision of what it is to be a Christian,
that is an illusion of what a disciple is - forgive us.

Merciful God, we thank you,
for despite the fact we can sometimes be underwhelming in how we live our lives,
you continue to shower us with mercy, forgiveness that is complete.
This day and all days,
we give thanks that we are your children,
known and drawn to you by such an expansive love.
Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 45, Resources for Transfiguration Sunday, 12 February 2023, p.114

Sing - The Anointing (Seasons 9-32)

As we come to our Bible readings, we prepare ourselves to be open to what we hear and encounter, we sing our prayer that God will lead us to listen...

*Lead us to listen,
to hear the heart speak.
O God in the quiet voice,
draw us to you.
Awaken our wisdom,
enlighten our vision.
Anoint us to heal
and to love as you do.*

give us hope that is bright.
May the small voice be our concern,
may we make burdens light.
Lead us to listen...

May we be slow to judge,
may we learn to forgive.
Through compassion and kindness,
may we let others live.

Give us faith that is strong,

Lead us to listen...

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Exodus 24:12-18

¹² The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' ¹³ So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ To the elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.'

¹⁵ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Reading: Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³ Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection

O Sacred Love, you encounter us in places where we seek you and in places where we flee from you. Ease our fears. Open our ears and eyes to you, wherever and in whomever you reveal yourself to us. Prepare us to journey as you call. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 19 February 2023, p.180

Every now and then, folk have asked me about how I go about preparing for Sunday. This week has been particularly eventful with one thing or another so I thought I would share something of it with you as an illustration.

At the beginning of each season or section of the year, I try to take some time to look through the lectionary readings and any other readings that might be relevant - some of you might remember that in the lead up to Christmas last year, we used a different set of readings as we explored the stories of the women in Jesus' family tree.

That process gives me a bit of an overview of what is coming up, but it also provides a lens for me as I engage with life and ministry, reflecting intentionally on how these parts of the Bible might be speaking to us today?

Then, at the beginning of each week, I look again at the readings for the following Sunday, consider their themes and begin to think and pray about what God might be wanting to say to us this at this time. In order for people to prepare, I need to have a broad theme and music ready by Monday or Tuesday at the latest. So I usually try to listen to a podcast about the readings early in the week and I look at the worship resources we have access to. Because this week is a special Sunday, and the events of the Transfiguration, like Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, is one that we engage with every year, the broad theme comes a little easier and so the liturgy and music came together reasonably easily.

Then, for me, comes the harder part - how do I present what the Bible is saying in a way that doesn't assume that everyone has heard it all before and engages with the reality of our world and living today? Is there something creative that might help with that? How do I speak into the experiences of such a diverse group of people - across a wide range of ages, backgrounds, life-experiences and biblical knowledge? And most of all, what do I understand God to be saying to us?

And that wrestling goes on for most of the week as I encounter the world and ask myself, how is God speaking into this today? On a good week, it all comes together on Thursday afternoon; on a more difficult week like this week, I am still trying to work that out late on Saturday afternoon!

So let me say something about the story we heard from Matthew's gospel.

The transfiguration in Christian teaching is presented as a pivotal moment, the point when human nature meets God. It is the meeting place of the temporal [the here and now] and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth. It not only provides the sense of how our eyes might be

opened to who Jesus is, but also, because God is 'at one with the Son', who God is. We understand God through the humanness of Jesus: his selfless kindness, his committed and unconditional love.

Spill The Beans, Resources for 19 February 2023, p.109

In other gospel accounts of this event, there is reference to Jesus' clothes 'dazzling white' with one gospel writer proclaiming them "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (Mark 9:3, NIV). In Matthew's account, he says that Jesus' "face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light" (Matthew 17:2). There is this sense of transcendence and the revealing of God's glory, or, as I like to think about it, a certainty of God's presence.

The presence of Moses and Elijah in the vision symbolise the coming together of the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) as they are fulfilled in Jesus.

The voice that speaks through the cloud, affirms Jesus as God's beloved Son with whom God is pleased and issues an instruction, "listen to him" (17:5)

The reading we put beside this experience of Jesus, is Moses' experience of God on Mt Sinai where while Moses is on the mountain, again there is a covering of cloud, but this time it is a fiery cloud.

And then there are the disciples - Peter, James and John - Peter who wants to put his tent up and stay on the mountain, and all three of them who fall down in fear (17:6). And after Jesus has reassured them, are then instructed to say nothing of their experience until "after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead" (17:8). I mean, what kind of instruction is that? It makes sense to us with the benefit of hindsight and the rest of Jesus' story, but I can imagine it making no sense whatsoever to those confused, frightened disciples!

So the question for me, for us, is - how does this speak to you today?
How does the event of the Transfiguration help us in how we live?

I have had a full week this week.

Yesterday, I spent the day in a Presbytery meeting half of which was business and the afternoon was spent listening to stories from congregations around the Presbytery about how they are responding to God's call in their communities. I have to say that the afternoon was much more life-giving than the morning.

The morning session saw us wrestling with a proposal that would re-shape the way the Presbytery attends to its business but there was great resistance and, in the end, no decision was made.

Throughout this week, too, I have been feeling more intensely the struggle to find people willing to take on roles within the life of the church and I worry when I think that I will have to pick up all the tasks that no-one else will do, what will I need to do differently to fit it all in, or what might I need to let go of in order to do something that was once done by someone else? Or while in my head I know that perhaps there are some things we might just need to let go of, I worry and feel the pain of letting go of something that perhaps we have been involved with for a long time.

But as I think about the Transfiguration, I am also left wondering about the way in which, sometimes God reveals Godself to us in ways that is extraordinarily beautiful or amazing, and, at the same time, deeply confronting, even frightening. When we realise who Jesus is and who God calls us to be, when we do listen to Jesus and begin to grasp this amazing vision of what God's realm might be like, and then we realise what God is asking of us - and we get sacred, we retreat into our tents, we dig our heels in.

But at that moment, Jesus reaches out to us, touches us and reminds us again that when we walk with him, when we keep our eyes fixed on him, we have nothing to be afraid of. And as we pick ourselves up and get on with whatever it is God has called us to, sometimes, just sometimes we need to keep our mouths shut and our ears open, until the right time is revealed - not just for us, but for everyone around us - and that time will come - again, it will be both confronting, for it involves something coming to the end of its life, and exciting, as new life emerges - because that is what the Christian life is all about at its core - an understanding of life, death and new life as fundamental to who we are and who we are called to be in the love and grace of God - Creator, Saviour and Sustainer. And it is this cycle we now enter intentionally as we prepare for Easter.

Ash Wednesday - this week - invites us into a time of reflection and prayer as we consider who we are in the light of Jesus, God's beloved Son, the one who lived our life, died our death and lives in each one of us, revealing God's unbounded love to the world we encounter. What a privilege! What a responsibility!

Let us pray...

Call us out of our complacency, generous God. Open our ears to your voice, our eyes to your brilliance, and our hands and hearts to share the blessings that you have made possible for us. Send us out to follow the Christ, the one with whom you are well pleased, and in whose name we make our prayer. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 19 February 2023, p.184

Responding

Sing - How Good Lord To Be Here (TIS 234)

In response, we sing a hymn - it may be a bit older in its tune, but its words invite us to reflect on the image of Jesus transfigured before us and reminds us that we are called to take this experience into our everyday.

How good, Lord, to be here!
your glory fills the night;
your face and garments, like the sun,
shine with unborrowed light.

Before we taste of death,
we see your Kingdom come;
we still would hold the vision bright,
and make this hill our home.

How good, Lord, to be here,
your beauty to behold,
where Moses and Elijah stand,
your messengers of old.

How good, Lord,
to be here!
yet we may not remain;
but since you bid us leave the mount,
come with us to the plain.

Fulfiller of the past,
promise of things to be:
we hail your body glorified,
and our redemption see.

Words: Joseph Robinson

Prayer for Others (Narelle Dempster)

Gracious God, as we bring before you our concerns for our world, our nation, our community and ourselves, we rejoice in your unconditional love and faithfulness that never changes. Lord, sometimes we don't understand why things happen the way they do or why things don't happen the way we want them too. So during those times we need to

make a choice to trust you and your promise that you are with us and that you do hear our cries.

We continue to pray for places in our world that are suffering from the incredible loss of life, property and livelihoods from the earthquakes in Turkiye, Syria and the cyclone in New Zealand. We are thankful for those on the ground providing assistance but so much more is needed to support, sustain and rebuild so many broken hearts and lives.

We pray for the continuing path to reconciliation with our First Nations peoples. As we move closer to the referendum to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and long overdue changes to our constitution, we ask that respect and dignity in speaking about our indigenous brothers and sisters would prevail over the fear, confusion and misinformation that some seek to spread.

For people in communities who struggle because they feel oppressed and fearful of the future for whatever reason - physical or mental illness, financial hardship, grieving loss, of loved ones, broken relationships, loss of jobs or acts of violence, Lord we ask for your peace to prevail in the midst of their torment.

Lord, hear our prayers today for those whom we know who are affected by sorrow or illness, by fear or weakness. Breathe into their lives and heal them. Speak their names and bring new life to their souls.

We hold before you in silence now people and situations you've laid on our hearts, those in our families and our community, particularly those who are in hospital or have been this week. {*silence...*}

As a congregation in Kiama-Jamberoo we ask your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to how you are leading us. We seek your wisdom and gentleness, humility and courage, and a heart to humble ourselves to be a people of prayer and dependence on you to make you and your love known to our community.

Lord, without you we can do nothing. Keep us humble and teachable we pray and continue to speak your word into our hearts that your will might be done in our lives, your church, and our world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Offering

As we have received, so we consider our response...

We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response.

As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with our time and energy and gifts; and about how we resolve to live differently because we have encountered the living Christ.

And if this is your first time with us or if you are visiting, please don't feel obliged to give. You are our guests, and we want you simply to enjoy the blessings of worshiping together. We are glad you are here!

Let us pray...

Living God,
take what we have,
and what we offer to you,

and make it something that is useful
to the church and the people of the world.
At times we think we do not have much to offer –
but show us how limiting that thought is.
Uncover for our eyes who we are,
what we have,
what we have been given,
and what is possible through us,
and so, make us generous for the sake of others.
We thank you God.
Amen.

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Sending

Sing - God Who Sets Us On A Journey (tune: Ode to Joy - TIS 698)

*As we leave the mountain and enter our everyday, we invite God to come with us
and to keep us moving even when we are tempted to get comfortable.*

God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.

End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we lack –
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.

Exploration brings new insights,
changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.

When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

Joy Dine

Sending and Blessing

In every journey, may we encounter the Christ.
On every mountaintop, may we know God's presence.
In every story, may we hear a word of grace.
And in every moment, may we encounter the transforming power of God.

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And the blessing of God: Divine Mystery, Divine Word, Divine Presence
is with you, always. Amen

Rev Kath Merrifield
19 February 2023