

February 14, 2020 – At-Home/Email Worship

A blessed Sabbath to you, and welcome to worship for the Sunday in which we celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus ☺ This celebration Sunday precedes Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent, and marks the end of the time following the Epiphany, when the light guides us to God made manifest in Jesus. On Wednesday this week we mark the beginning of Lent, and soon thereafter mark a year since we have shifted into this COVID-affected life. There is much to reflect on. Likewise, as our regional municipality considers the shift from Stay-At-Home Order to what comes next, we also will be looking at what comes next.

Most of you have now gotten our survey letter for our AGM on March 21st, 2021 which may happen on Zoom, if in-person gathering remains unavailable. **Please carefully follow and respond to this letter, to ensure that you do your part in congregational decision-making, if your membership makes you eligible to vote per our church's constitution:** *"A voting member is one who has been confirmed in this congregation, or received by adult baptism, or received by transfer as confirmed members from another Lutheran congregation or another congregation in full communion with the ELCIC, or received by affirmation of faith as baptized adults. Voting members must have received Holy Communion and have made a contribution of record within the current or preceding calendar year."*

In February & March as long as travel remains safe, delivery of home communion kits, doorway and walking visits continue, especially with those who are not able to attend by Zoom. Mindful of the extreme cold, and the fact that I am not entering homes, please do not be offended if the visit at your door is short ☺ **I also would love to know if you have the time and ability to make a few phone calls in a given week, to help keep up our telephone visiting with each other, or to help with card ministry – all ways of remaining connected.** We remain in community we vaccinate ourselves against the isolation that COVID is imposing. This vaccine is readily available, no politics involved ☺

**This week's Sunday worship service on Zoom is available via this link:
Feb 14, 2021 09:45 AM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81373958909?pwd=czgwSDlJBya0JQYzVQd1dRNTB6dz09>

Meeting ID: 813 7395 8909 & Passcode: 421807

You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of the Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply):

1 587 328 1099 or
1 647 374 4685 or
1 647 558 0588 or
1 778 907 2071 or
1 204 272 7920 or
1 438 809 7799

For this Ash Wednesday, on February 17th, you have two services available:

- A Zoom service from St Peter's at 5.30 pm, which will include anointing with oil (any cooking grade oil you have at home will work), and communion. This service is also available in print and by email with YouTube links. To join this Zoom service, click:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86236235915?pwd=QTVWaGc1UGZPdldWTFVld3lOQTVPUT09>
Meeting ID: 862 3623 5915 & Passcode: 461473
use the same telephone numbers as for Sunday worship.
- A livestream Synod-Wide service will be made available on Facebook, with Bishop Michael Pryse preaching, beginning at 6.30 pm. That service is accessible through this link (<https://www.facebook.com/ESynodELCIC>). All are welcome. There will be imposition of Ashes, so if you have ash paste (burn your Palm Sunday cross from last year and mix with a drop or two of olive oil), you can impose ashes during the service. There will NOT be communion at the Synod service.

On a typical, pre-COVID Ash Wednesday, we would gather at church and our worship service would include the imposition of ashes on foreheads and communion. Each year, I have used ashes made from the previous year's Lenten palms being burnt, then mixed into a paste with olive oil. This ash paste is marked on your foreheads, with the reminder: *"Remember that we all are dust, and to dust we all shall return."*

This Lent, and this Ash Wednesday, drawing so close as to touch your forehead to impose ashes would violate the teaching we get from Jesus on Maundy Thursday: to love each other. This year, the best way for us to continue to love each other is to maintain our social distancing, keep safe, and to worship from our homes. However, regardless of the mortal realities which themselves remind us daily that we all are dust, and to dust we shall return, we are also members of Christ's body, marked by divine Spirit in a unity which no pandemic can undermine. Our unity in Jesus, marked by the cross at baptism, and our call to follow Jesus forms the central theme of our Lenten learning in 2021.

This Ash Wednesday, your invitation is to remind yourself of your baptismal anointing, by marking your own forehead with a cross, not of ash paste, but of oil. Any kind of cooking grade oil will do – I usually use olive oil at baptisms.

Our learning context for Lent, which is woven through the Lenten Sundays, is examining our own lives and the current realities of our community, and asking ourselves the question:

"Joined at our baptism in Spirit, as members of the body of Christ Jesus, how are we called to witness?"

Our in-house Lenten study material will be delivered each Sunday of Lent, in the form of four fictional stories I have authored (based on real life circumstances). You will have a week with each story before it is unpacked along with scripture the following Sunday, when a new fictional story will be provided. You will receive the stories in print form along with Sunday worship material. Your print content will come to you in the week following the Sunday when the service is "aired" on Zoom (in keeping with the week-after-the-Sunday delivery, which we began in 2021). So, your first "story" will arrive in the post the week of February 21st 😊

Your Lenten learning job, should you choose to undertake it, is to read the story and spend some time with the questions and scripture(s) provided each Sunday, before they are unpacked the following Sunday in the sermon. So, for the season of Lent, this is our in-house study plan:

Week of: Sunday February 21st – preface teaching on the use of stories for our spiritual teaching, deliver the first story "Two Guys in the Attic" and scriptures with home-study questions, which will be studied together on February 28th.

Week of: February 28th – sermon on "Two Guys in the Attic" and scriptures, deliver the second story "Susie's Home on the Grand" and scriptures with home-study questions, which will be studied together on March 7th.

Week of: March 7th – sermon on "Susie's Home on the Grand" and scriptures, deliver the third story "George in the Garage" and scriptures with home-study questions, which will be studied together on March 14th.

Week of: March 14th – sermon on "George in the Garage" and scriptures, deliver the fourth story "Sheldon seeks Sanctuary" and scriptures with home-study questions, which will be studied together on March 28th (March 21st is AGM, so we will have a shorter service on that Sunday, leaving our last story review for Palm Sunday, March 28th).

Week of: March 21st – short service as Zoom-involved AGM which may take more time than in-person only AGM.

Week of: March 28th – Palm Sunday – sermon on "Sheldon seeks Sanctuary" and scriptures.

If you need a check in with me, please do reach out by email or phone: pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org or 519-653-4721 ☺ Have a blessing filled week, and please do be in touch if I may be of help or support in these times!

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

Click for land acknowledgement, email service:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Zar8-GeUs>

Please take a few moments of silence,
prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship.

Gathering Hymn: Arise, My Soul, Arise ELW 827, Text Johan Kahl, Finnish Folk Tune; Bradley Moggach, Piano

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1V7AinwJHk>

Text: Johan Karl/ Tr. Ernest Ryden, Dale Wood; Finnish Folk Tune; Text: © 1958, Augsburg Fortress

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Greeting:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day: Abiding God, you walk with us through the entire journey: from mountain top experience to the deepest, darkest valley. Keep our hearts thankful on this journey. In the valley times, when the gospel may be veiled, give us your wisdom, trust and faith to know you are still with us – every step of our journey – with Jesus’ accompaniment and lead. Help us to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. Amen.

The Lesson: 2 Corinthians 4:1-10

Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. [NRSV]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation of the Word: Wait for the Lord ELW 262; Bradley Moggach, Bells and Synthesizer

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvyhXkQCu-Q>

Text: Taizé Community; Music: Jacques Berthier; © 1984, Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent

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The Holy Gospel according to Mark 9:2-9

Glory to you O Lord.

Then he drove it home by saying, “This isn’t pie in the sky by and by. Some of you who are standing here are going to see it happen, see the kingdom of God arrive in full force.”

Six days later, three of them *did* see it. Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus.

Peter interrupted, “Rabbi, this is a great moment! Let’s build three memorials—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.” He blurted this out without thinking, stunned as they all were by what they were seeing.

Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: “This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him.”

The next minute the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes, seeing nothing but Jesus, only Jesus. Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. “Don’t tell a soul what you saw. After the Son of Man rises from the dead, you’re free to talk.” [The Message Translation]

This is the Gospel of our Lord. Praise to you O Christ.

Message – (significant portions from today’s sermon come from the working preacher website, commentary on this lectionary, these parts are shown in quotes here).

On Tuesday this coming week our Stay-At-Home order comes to an end, and as yet, we do not know what that will mean for our worship life – whether we will be able to gather again for in-person worship, whether restrictions will be lifted, not too much is clear right now.

What is clear, what numbers have been showing is that restricting our movements and our visits and our contact with others does seem to be bringing down infection rates. Whether or not similar restrictions remain in place, we know that practicing many of the same precautions will work in favour of quelling the infection rates in our community. Perhaps in anticipation of this, one of the ministries we engage in: helping with Mike’s Lunch at the Food Bank, has us back on duty this coming Saturday. When I emailed out some of our regular disciples, I was glad to quickly get lots of “we will be available” replies.

On Sundays, and especially when we were able to gather in church, we worship in a way that celebrates Jesus’ as the carpenter’s son from Nazareth who has become our teacher and our saviour – bathed in light. We look to this transformed or transfigured Jesus in hope, even in the most difficult of times.

And, when we celebrate communion, again we engage in a sacrament which involves transformation, a remembrance meal in which we believe that, through a Holy miracle, of divine interaction with normal grocery store items, we become united as one body of believers, with all other believers in Jesus ... united in this body that has eternal life.

These are not ordinary things: worship, communion, and our own existence in this transformed reality in which we ourselves occupy these mere human bodies, but are actually part of an eternal body that is one with God.

And yet, we live in the very real world, of infection rates, mask wearing and modeling for infection curves for the future. We live in a real world where things are opening and closing, closing and opening according to some very mortal realities. And we, this Sunday, are on the cusp of entering into the season of Lent, when we remember again the journey of Jesus’ ministry as he goes directly to the cross to die for each and every one of us.

We sure do believe some strange things. It is no small wonder to me that there are NOT more people in the world who believe in Jesus ... because all that I have described about transformation and transfiguration is incredible, and incredibly unbelievable stuff.

Transfiguration Sunday places us smack-dab in the middle of the unbelievable stuff ...

“At first, it seems, Jesus and Peter, James, and John are out for a hike. A high mountain: the sort of place eager mountaineers might yearn to scale for the vista. Then everything changes.

The vision the disciples behold removes the veil of Jesus’ humanness to reveal his divinity: wondrous, frightening, powerful, unexpected, and rich, connecting all ages (the prophets Elijah and Moses with Jesus), giving enlightenment. His external appearance is utterly changed.

Jesus’ transfiguration is not to be approached with the assumption that we can understand it. It means to draw us in toward what is abnormal, unnatural—like the burning fire that does not consume the bush ... The Transfiguration places Jesus in the lineage and honor of the two prophets who stand beside him on the mountain.

The disciples are terrified in a way that means they fear they will be harmed (see Ezekiel 34:28). Yet, they seek for a way to remain in the presence of what terrifies them. The drama of the moment suggests that it harbors danger.

The Transfiguration gives the disciples the experience of witnessing a most amazing and unspeakable vision that draws them to want to stay there, dwell in that place of wonder, and then to be told by the voice of the divine that their job is not to abide in that wonder but to go back down the mountain.”

Our job is not to abide in Sunday worship mode, in the miracle of communion and the bliss of thanksgiving mode each and every day ... our job is to go back down the mountain ... always to re-engage with the difficult realities of our world as disciples of Jesus, followers of a teacher who, by the way, is also our Saviour.

"In worship, week after week, through the Word of God, our vision is restored. We are enabled by God to see Jesus as savior (something more than a teacher of morality and ethics) because the dazzling clothes constitute an epiphany. His transfiguration transforms the disciples in the story and transforms us by removing the veil over our vision.

The Transfiguration stands between the Time after Pentecost, when we are learning to be church, and Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday, when we are thrust back into the hard truth that we are dust. The power of the Transfiguration is that it plants in our hearts and minds the brilliance of eternity on the mountain with the greatest prophets, emboldening us for the journey together as the body of Christ. The Transfiguration thus prepares us to come to terms with our humility, our soil nature, our utter dependence on God."

And, as we move through this time after Epiphany into Lent, we will shift our focus to examine our own soil nature, our own human ways and look to how Jesus teaches and invites us to live in the world as His disciples. Like the disciples in the transfiguration story, we are called to listen to the Son of God, to heed his teachings.

"That listening does not result in staying aloof where the air is pure and the view is stunning. The church must listen to the voice of God's Word in our midst so that we follow in a way that leads to the cross. We are not called to have power over others but to rise up as dust that has been formed by the breath of God and give life to others, especially those who are neglected by the powerful."

We will go through Lent studying a series of short stories I will provide, which are based on my own experiences with actual people. I clothe them in fiction to protect their identities, but many aspects of these stories are true. You may see yourself in them, and it is my hope that you will have the courage to listen to how the Gospel speaks to you through them.

Let us not only see Jesus as that vision of light on the mountain top, but let us listen to what he calls us into, and follow the way in which he leads us. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: Be Thou My Vision ELW 793 Text Irish; Tune Slane; Bradley Moggach, Organ

Click here: <https://youtu.be/C2DkJKyKYN4>

Text: Irish, E. H. Huff, M. E. Byrne; Tune: Slane; Irish Traditional; Words and Music Public Domain.
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**** Prayers of the People**

As we celebrate the manifestation of Jesus, to all people in this time after Epiphany, let us pray for the needs in our world, responding to the call: God who provides all, with hear our prayer.

Gracious and Holy God, your eternal purposes revealed in Jesus demonstrate your love extends to the ends of the earth, far beyond our capacity to imagine. We give thanks for your expansive love, and for the abundant ways in which you make yourself known to us.

We pray for all who believe in you,
Too often afraid of the rich diversity you have designed,
Too often timid in our proclamation of the good news of your love-example, before the rulers and powers of this world.

Strengthen our witness, our voices, hearts and minds.

Fill us with Divine Spirit, that we may be bold and courageous, to live our witness of faith in Jesus.

God who provides all, hear our prayer.

Heal divisions in our world of knowledge, belief and power,
So that your world may know the unity of love, sharing in the promises of Jesus,
Knowing the peace those promises provide.

God who provides ALL, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are struggling in and with darkness,

Darkness of health, of soul, of mind, of spirit.

We call upon your power to make apparent and manifest the knowledge of Jesus,

The light which darkness cannot overcome.

God who provides ALL, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have little power according to the world's measure of power.

Guide us to be your defense in the cause of the poor, according to your will;

Guide us to be your hands and feet in deliverance of those in need, in ending oppression, according to your will.

Bring your healing to those in need, your comfort to those who are hurting. Show us how to help.

God who provides ALL, hear our prayer.

Help us to be your light that makes Jesus manifest in our world. Show us the way, we pray, in Jesus' precious name.
Amen.

Let us share the peace of Christ:

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

Meal:

Click here if you are accessing YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0YEYAO080U>

I invite you to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.

Communion Hymn: Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ ELW 674; Jessika Mannell, vocal; Bradley Moggach, Piano

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVKkz95RBdw>

Text: Fred Kaan; Tune: Jamaican Folk Tune, adapt, Doreen Potter; ©Words 1975 Hope Publishing Co.

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****Prayer after Communion:**

People of God: arise and shine, for your light has come and the glory of God shines through you.

Get up: shake off apathy, despair and all that brings you low.

People of God: show the light and love of Jesus,

so that others may know Jesus who is in you,

and shines from within you.

Take all that today's worship has filled you with, and pour it out in the coming week ☺

Amen.

Sending Hymn: You Satisfy the Hungry Heart ELW 484 With Lyrics; Bradley Moggach, Organ

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dJhxiwfjJc>

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Blessing:

May the love of God uphold you;

the light of Christ guide you;

and the fellowship of Spirit fill you with joy,

now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal: Go with Jesus, shining Christ light into the world. *Thanks be to God.*

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