

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, March 2 AT 10.00 AM**  
**Transfiguration Sunday**  
**Encountering the God of Mountains and Valleys**

**WELCOME**

In our church's calendar, the season between Christmas and Lent is known as Epiphany. Today is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, and is known as Transfiguration Sunday.

Transfiguration in our everyday language means a change in form or appearance.

In the reading from the Hebrew scriptures which we'll hear, Moses is changed by his encounter with God on Mount Sinai.

In the gospel reading, Jesus and three of the disciples encounter God on a mountaintop, and are changed by the experience.

**LIGHT THE CANDLE / AFFIRMATIONS**

God is here            **God is always here**  
God is with us        **God is always with us**

**MISSION AND VALUES**

Our vision is to be a loving and caring community, sharing God's love with the world.

**We are a congregation who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles. We are creating a safe place for the community and sharing the journey of life and faith.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the sovereign custodians of this place where we gather, the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation.

We offer their elders our respect, those past and those present.

We commit to working for a more just settlement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in these lands.

**OPENING PRAYER**

God our most holy Friend, today grant us as much of the light of Christ as we can bear, that we may be rescued from the illusions and shadows that inhibit our faith, our worship and our daily service. Grant us a transfiguring moment or two, that we may discern something of your beauty and worship your immeasurable love. Through this same Christ Jesus who makes all things new.

**Amen!**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Behold the shining greatness of God –  
God in glory, Jesus esteemed,  
Jesus keeping company with the greats!  
Come, join the conversations of heaven.

**Animate and energise our faith, O God;**

**Fuel our hope.**

**Expand our love.**

Faith, hope and love are the beautiful and necessary gifts we are given for the adventure of following God into all the world.

Come, let's worship our God.

**SING – Immortal, invisible, God only wise – TiS 143**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, but ruling in might;  
your justice like mountains high soaring above,  
your clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

You give life to all, Lord, to both great and small,  
in all life now living, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on a tree,  
then wither: but ever unchanged you will be.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
your angels adore you, all veiling their sight;  
of all your rich graces this grace, Lord, impart –  
take the veil from our faces, the veil from our heart.

All praise we would render: reveal to our sight  
what hides you is only the splendour of light;  
and so let your glory, Almighty, impart,  
through Christ in the story, your Christ to the heart.

PD ; words: Walter Chalmers Smith

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**SING – A voice is heard – All together 430**

Come, let us praise our God,  
come let us sing for joy.  
With a heart of thanks we give honour.  
You are a mighty God,  
you are the source of life.  
Creator God, we give praise.

From the deepest seas – a voice is heard.  
From the highest hills – a voice is heard.  
From the rich dark earth – a voice is heard.  
All creation sings! God is heard!

Come, let us praise our God,  
come let us sing for joy.  
With a heart of thanks we give honour.  
You are a mighty God,  
you are the source of life.  
Creator God, we give praise.

Through the darkest night – a voice is heard.  
Through the breaking dawn – a voice is heard.  
Through the heart of life – a voice is heard.  
All creation sings! God is heard!

Come, let us praise our God,  
come let us sing for joy.  
With a heart of thanks we give honour.  
You are a mighty God,  
you are the source of life.  
Creator God, we give praise.

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### **CONFESSION**

Christ, Brother, Teacher, Friend,  
As we look upon your face transformed by the light of Love,  
we confess that we have chosen at times to walk in the darkness of fear, prejudice,  
selfishness, shame and pride.  
As we marvel at your ability to forgive and heal, reconcile and make new,  
we confess that we have chosen to hold fast to anger and resentment,  
to cling stubbornly to how things have always been.  
As we prepare to come to the table to remember how you lived your life for others and to  
receive your gift of grace,  
we confess that we allow greed and fear to drive our actions.  
We pause in silence, for some of us need more time to reflect and repent before you.

### **SILENCE**

In your mercy, free us from the bonds of evil.  
Liberate our minds from the shackles of insecurity and fear, hatred and greed.  
Shine the light of your love upon us —  
that by that light we may know we are already forgiven, called by name and beloved.

### **WORDS OF GRACE**

The disciples who fell asleep in Gethsemane  
were never cut from God's affection,  
never excluded from participation  
in God's dream for the world.  
God forgave them.

**God forgives us.**

God filled them with peace.

**God gives us peace.**

Brothers and sisters,  
we are one with God, put back on our feet,  
wrapped in love and grace  
that embraces us even at our worst.

## PEACE

**All: God makes peace within us. Let us claim it.**

**God makes peace between us. Let us share it** (*nwi*).

One: Let us greet one another as a sign of God's peace.

The peace of God is here... to stay. (*Iona*)

**All: Thanks be to God.**

A brief summary of the action that leads to today's reading from Exodus.

Moses and Aaron are leading the people of Israel through the wilderness.

At one point, Moses ascends Mt Sinai, and returns with the Ten Commandments, which are rules for how God wishes the people of Israel to behave., , written on two tablets of stone.

When the people of Israel get tired of waiting for Moses to return, and ask Aaron to make a golden calf to worship.

Moses returns from mt Sinai, sees the people breaking what are in fact the first two commandments, and shatters the stone tablets.

Moses goes back up the mountain to ask God to forgive the sins of the people, and returns with what is in effect the second edition of the ten commandments.

The story continues.

## READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

### Exodus 34 : 29-35

<sup>29</sup>Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. <sup>30</sup>When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. <sup>31</sup>But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. <sup>32</sup>Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup>When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; <sup>34</sup>but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, <sup>35</sup>the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

In the first part of chapter 9, Jesus has been teaching his disciples, and sending them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

Then we have the episode where Jesus feeds a large crowd of followers with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

When Jesus asks his disciples who the crowds think he is, the replies come back John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the ancient prophets. But Peter replies "The Messiah of God"

The story continues...

## **READING FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES Luke 9 : 28-36**

<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup>Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup>They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup>Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup>While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" <sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

### **REFLECTION –**

Today is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, and also it is transfiguration Sunday. And the season of Lent begins this Wednesday and we call this Wednesday "Ash Wednesday". The Transfiguration of Christ is the climaxing point of his public life, as his baptism is its starting point, and his Ascension its end. First Sunday of Epiphany the text is always about the baptism of Jesus: Skies open, voice from the heavens says, "This is my son, the beloved: with him I am well pleased". Now the last Sunday of Epiphany, Jesus is on a high mountain; they enveloped in a cloud, and a voice again says, "This is my son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased".

Jesus and three of his disciples had gone to a mountain to pray. The tired disciples at some point fall asleep - but Jesus continues in prayer, he continues to prepare himself for the events that lie just before him, his trip up the road to Jerusalem and towards the cross. As Jesus prays something we cannot explain happens to him - his countenance, and even the robe he is wearing, begins to glow until it is a dazzling white. As the disciples struggle back to consciousness they see Jesus shining, and with him they see two men - Moses and Elijah the prophet - talking with him, and they are full of fright, full of awe, full of joy at what they see. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." But while Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" The experience that they witnessed, the experience that they were part of, remained with them, until eventually it was recorded in three of the four gospels. It remained with them - and it shaped them - and it became part of them, part of their testimony -part of their witness to who Christ was - to who Christ is.

As we come into the season of Lent, I think that we do well to be attentive to this vision, to this experience, in the manner that Peter suggests. We do well to attend to the fact that Jesus is more than the fellow from next door, more than a good and a nice person with whom we can walk and talk, more than a good example for our children and our grandchildren to follow. Jesus is the Son of God - the chosen one - the one whom we are commanded to listen to. Jesus is the Chosen One - the one who is able to carry us into the presence of God - the one who gives peace - the one who gives joy - the one who gives

victory over sin and death. Sometimes I think we forget this. Sometimes I think we fall into our daily routines without a thought about the divinity that surrounds us, without any real awareness of the power that surrounds us and holds us up. We have business to do, we have people to see. And in the hurry - in the work that we do we lose track of where we are going; we lose track of whose we are and what has been promised to those who are attentive to him.

I think most of us here today take time to talk to God and pray to God and ask God for his help. That is good. But how many of us here today actually listen to God? How many of us here in our time of prayer stop talking, - stop reading, - stop thinking about what concerns us and simply listen, - listen to the point where you can hear your pulse beating in your ears and feel the air moving steadily and strongly in and out of your lungs, - listen to the point where images began to dance and the spirit begins to put words upon your hearts, words that you do not think about - words that come from somewhere within you - words of praise and of assurance, words of guidance and of comfort. How many of us wait upon the Lord until he answers - until he speaks.

A friend of mine some years ago asked the question - how many people actually have the kind of experience or vision like that which is described in today's gospel? And if we do - so what? I can't say I have had an experience like that of Jesus or the disciples. My cloth has never shone any whiter than it is today - a voice from heaven has never come forth from a cloud in my presence. But I know my friends from the things that I occasionally see when I stop what I am doing and look and listen to what is happening around me deep within me - that there is a huge and great power operating in this world - an invisible power that manifests itself in startling expressions of love and care - and upon occasion in vivid demonstrations of beauty and of raw power. It is a healing power - a sustaining power - a giving power - one able to bear one through the most horrible of times - one that weeps with me when I sorrow - and holds me when I feel close to despair.

Are you afraid today? Are you troubled? Then today is a time to step aside for a while, to find the quiet space in which you can pour out your heart to God, to climb the mountain of transfiguration and to fix your eyes upon the fire and the cloud of God's presence, and to pray - and to listen. Do you remember what happened to Peter after his mountain top experience? We know that Peter baptized more than 3000 people a day after he finished his sermon on the Pentecost day. He was forever changed. It was the decisive, transforming moment in his life. When Peter proclaimed the Good News, he always remembered his mountain top experience that transformed him and gave him power. It is same to us today. When we meet Jesus and experience Jesus and accept the challenge to become modern day disciples, our lives are changed or transformed. Then we are able to change our world.

Brothers and sisters in Christ! I believe that we all share the same vision: to experience peace and happiness, with our families and children being healthy, joyful, and blessed; to experience God's grace daily and live a blessed life full of his love and joy. We also share the vision of our church being filled with many people, where we can worship God together with joy and serve our community in the love of Christ. I also believe that you want to be a good Christian with a strong relationship with God, and that you desire for your children to grow in faith. In this important moment, God asks us one thing. He wants

us to climb to a mountain, a high spiritual mountain. There, he wants us to understand who he is, how much he loves us and cares us. He wants us to pray there and see and experience God and listen to him closely. And he wants us to experience transformation there and come down from the mountain to a world of needs to love and serve others. Amen.

The refrain of our next song tells us to open our eyes and see ourselves standing with Jesus on the hill, the ones who God loves.

The verses refer to events in Jesus life, particularly some of the encounters as he moves on the journey from the transfiguration to Jerusalem. See if you can pick Jesus healing, talking to the woman at the well, welcoming the prodigal son, raising Jairus' daughter.

**SING** – Open your eyes – All together 555

*Refrain*

*Open your eyes, see yourself  
in the One who's shining on the hill.*

*Hear the voice say to you,  
"This is the one that I love!"*

*Open your eyes, see yourself  
in the One who's shining on the hill.*

*Hear the voice say to you,  
"This is the one that I love!"*

See yourself in the waters of the Jordan,  
baptised into all that Christ will do.

Go to your Jerusalem, eat and watch and pray with Him.

Take your cross and follow on the way.

*Refrain*

See yourself in the healing of the lepers,  
see yourself in the raising of the dead.

Hear what demons say to Him;  
be denied, betrayed with Him;  
die and rise up each and every day.

*Refrain*

See yourself in the worn and weary healer –  
talking with the woman at the well!

One more boundary broken down,  
everywhere is holy ground  
now the real Messiah's here to stay!

*Refrain*

See yourself in the resurrected daughter,  
see yourself in the wand'rer welcomed home.

'He was dead but lives again!'  
We can celebrate with him,  
like the angels when the lost is found.

## OFFERING

***Mountain-top Spirit of mystery,  
we offer our gifts and our lives  
that they may open ways to a renewed world,  
a world of healing and reconciliation,  
a world of love, of justice  
and hope. Amen.***

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of the mountains,  
God of the valleys,  
We know you are with us through thick and thin!  
We think of all the good things.  
At this time, we are happy and thankful about...  
    For families and friends  
    For the privilege of living our lives in a peaceful country,

We give our thanks,  
O Creator God.

We think also of those harder things  
in our own lives and in the wider world,  
those valley experiences that we wouldn't always choose  
and need your help with,  
those situations we long for you to change.  
    For the people of Ukraine, Gaza, and other areas of conflict  
    For Australians struggling with poverty and homelessness  
    For families affected by domestic violence ...

Comfort us and assure us  
with your loving kindness and presence.  
Help us and help the world  
O Creator God.

Let the earth feel the gravity of your goodness;  
may your holy love bring goodness to all of our lives.  
Holy are you! Amen.



**SING** – God will not forget you - ppt

Can the wind forget to blow, the tree forget to sway?  
Can the sun forget to rise to start another day?  
Will the bird forget to sing, the bee forget to fly?  
Will a branch forget the tree, a cloud forget the sky?

God will not forget you in the dark of night.  
When you cannot see the path, God will be your light.  
God will not forget you when the day is long.  
In the lonely, silent hour God will be your song.  
God will not forget you.  
God will not forget you.

Can the stars forget to shine, the moon forget to glow?  
Can the planets all forget the way they have to go?  
Even if the world we see should change before our eyes –  
temperatures forget to fall, the seas begin to rise.

God will not forget you in the dark of night.  
When you cannot see the path, God will be your light.  
God will not forget you when the day is long.  
In the lonely, silent hour God will be your song.  
God will not forget you.  
God will not forget you.

### **BLESSING AND SENDING**

Brothers and sisters,  
we have been drawn near to the beauty and radiance of God;  
We have been given glimpses  
of another world that is on the way.  
God's dream for the whole world.  
God is at work making all things new.  
May we continue to see the splendour of God before us.  
May we sense the energising hope of God within us.  
And may we be carried into all the world  
by the unbreakable love of God that is always for us. Go in peace.

**SING** – God will not forget you – ppt