

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**Sunday, February 19, 2023 – Transfiguration Sunday**

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m.

Email [smiletoday9@proton.me](mailto:smiletoday9@proton.me) to get the Zoom link.

**Prelude**

**Opening Hymn: VU 104 *We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding*, vv. 1, 2, 3**

1. We have come at Christ's own bidding to this high and holy place,  
where we wait with hope and longing for some token of God's grace.  
Here we pray for new assurance that our faith is not in vain,  
searching like those first disciples for a sign both clear and plain.
2. Light breaks in upon our darkness; splendour bathes the flesh-joined Word;  
Moses and Elijah marvel as the heavenly voice is heard.  
Eyes and hearts behold with wonder how the Law and Prophets meet:  
Christ, with garments drenched in brightness, stands transfigured and complete.
3. Strengthened by this glimpse of glory, fearful lest our faith decline,  
we like Peter find it tempting to remain and build a shrine.  
But true worship gives us courage to proclaim what we profess,  
that our daily lives may prove us people of the God we bless.

**Welcome and Announcements**

Welcome to everyone on this Transfiguration Sunday. Lent begins next week. There will be Ash Wednesday services at noon and 5:00. In the sanctuary and on Zoom. Details are in the NEWS.

Those at home, if you are new here, note that our contact information is at the end of the video, and you might want to visit our Facebook page, YouTube channel, or website, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter. We also have a Social Hour on Zoom, every Sunday night at 7. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address is also at the end of the video and is on our main YouTube page.

**Remembering Terence Carscadden**

On Tuesday of this past week, Terence Ross Carscadden was welcomed the peace and fullness of God's presence. He was a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, and friend. We give thanks for his faithful Christian service that flowed through his 45-year career as a family physician. His presence will be missed here at St. Andrew's where even in his frail years we would have him here worshipping with us. He was a tireless volunteer, loved adventures and sports, and I want to particularly give thanks for his golfing group – Bert, Roger, Eric, and Mallon. We also hold in love and prayer Terry's wife Sylvia, a steadfast leader in this church who has done such a wonderful job supporting Terry and coordinating his care, and we pray for Terry's children Susan, Barbara, Ron, and Janine and their partners and Terry's grandchildren.

God, as we light this candle, we give thanks for the huge impact that Terry made on this community of faith, on the larger community whom he cared for, and we give thanks for the legacy that Terry left his family. He is now wrapped deeply within your peace and presence, and so we ask that you give comfort in all the cherished memories to all who loved him. Amen.

There will be a visitation time here at the church from 4 to 8pm on Sunday February 19, and a Celebration of Terry's life on Monday February 20 at 1:30pm and a reception to follow.

Jane Baggs wanted me to say that we need cookies and squares and people to volunteer to help set up and arrange the cookie plates and make the tea and coffee and clean up. If you are able to help, please email or call her - [baggsjane@gmail.com](mailto:baggsjane@gmail.com) or 705-522-6763.

## Inviting Holy Light

Grounding ourselves. We have made it here, this moment. The gift of this moment, this sacred time, this sacred space, gathered across cyberspace, all of Christ's beloved. Give thanks for this moment quietly, as you take slow, deep breaths. [*lights candle*] Let this Candle be a light to our mountain moments. The Transfiguration story tells us that Jesus' clothes became dazzling white. Let the light of the candle bring a sense of 'awe' and wonder into this time and place. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Amen.

## Sung Response: VU 82 *A Light is Gleaming, Chorus*

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night, living in the light.  
Come, share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright, living in the light.

## Nurturing Safe Space

Each and every one of us is welcome in this space. Whether you feel you are joyous or sorrowful, whole or in pieces, confident or questioning, you are welcome. Whatever our age, or skin colour, or sexual identity, all of us are beloved children of God, and we are welcome. This is a come-as-you-are worship. I invite us into this worship space as watchers of the word, as participants in the struggle, as agents of God's light and love, as revelers in the joy, and as members of an inclusive body. Let us worship God together. Let us open our eyes, ears, hearts, and minds to the divine's loving presence among us.

## Acknowledging Traditional Territory

We begin this time of worship by acknowledging the lands where we gather today have been places of gathering for First Nations people as they camped and travelled across the land for generations beyond our knowing. Before people arrived from across the seas, these Nations lived, loved, raised children and made a living. They lived in harmony with all that the Creator had made. As we gather today, we recognize those traditional sojourners in our particular land – here in downtown Sudbury, we give thanks for the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnabek who called this home long before settlers arrived. We give thanks for them and for the lands on which we meet. We acknowledge that our history has come at a great cost to the aboriginal community, and we commit ourselves to be partners in healing and reconciliation with understanding and intention.

## Call to Worship

Let us see a wonder, a vision never seen.

**Do we dare to journey? Yes, for God is there.**

Let us start a journey close to God's hill.

**Let us tell the world what God will now fulfill.**

Do we dare to journey? Yes, for God is there.

**Let us start a journey to worship in this place.**

Let us seek our God and meet God face to face.

**Do we dare to journey? Yes, for God is here.**

## Opening Prayer

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. We pray now the traditional version of the prayer that Jesus taught...

## The Prayer that Jesus Taught

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kin-dom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn: VU 299 Teach Me, God, to Wonder, vs. 1**

1. Teach me, God, to wonder, teach me, God, to see;  
let your world of beauty capture me.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

**Time up Front**

**Dave:** I'm going to ask Jill to share with you a really amazing story from the Bible.

**Matthew 17, opening verses – The Message (Jill Bennett)**

Jesus took Peter and the brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light. Then they realized that Moses and Elijah were also there in deep conversation with him.

Peter broke in, "Master, this is a great moment! What would you think if I built three memorials here on the mountain—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah?"

While he was going on like this, babbling, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them...

*Dave presses the "Pause" button...*

Ok, Ok. So, have you ever had a moment like this? Where you went, "Wow, that's awesome!" (responses) When I was younger, I travelled. I was on my own. It was exciting, seeing stuff where people didn't tell me, "Hey, look at that."

It might be mountains in Alberta or British Columbia. It might be seeing a beautiful sunset. Or feeling safe at home on a cold night, but going out to see the stars. Wow moments. Jesus' friends didn't know what to say or do. All they could do was just witness what God was showing them. Jesus shining from the inside out, it is called Transfiguration.

Sometimes people call it a "mountaintop experience." Everyone gets them, you just have to be ready. To go wow. To sit, maybe not know what to say. Or maybe you write down your feelings in a journal, or draw a picture. But nothing is like being there!

This is a repeat-after-me prayer: Thank you, God, for those moments of wonder... Those moments that make us say, "Wow!"... Thank you for the little things too;... all are gifts from you... Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.

**Hymn: VU 299 Teach Me, God, to Wonder, vv. 3, 4**

3. Let me, God, be ready, let me be awake,  
in your world of loving my place take.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

4. Teach me, God, to know you, hear you when you speak,  
see you in my neighbour when we meet.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

**Scripture Reading – Matthew 17:1-8 (Jill Bennett)**

*Epiphany culminates in the dazzling vision of Jesus on a mountaintop in which heaven and Earth, history and future, all come together with sun, cloud, past prophets, and a voice from above to reveal the unique and beloved nature of Jesus as God's son.*

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

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.' 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!'

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Let us pray: 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.

**Message:** "A Mountaintop Experience: But then What?"

**Dave:** Among my favourite stories in the Bible. It is dripping with mystery. People can explain it, scientifically, psychologically, sociologically, but the imagery of light, and the appearance of those heroes of the Hebrew Bible, Elijah and Moses, tells me that this was an awe-inspiring moment. Let's hear a story imagined from Peter's perspective...

**Jill:**

If Peter had kept a journal... Today was one of those days.

I meant well. I really did.

I had the chance to go with Jesus – James and John went, too – to climb a mountain, something I've always wanted to do but have been too busy to take the time. I've wondered what it might be like – the view from the top.

No sooner had we reached the top and caught our breath when I turned around to see Jesus, well – shining. Truly, he was shining, like when I was out on the boat and looked up directly at the sun on a cloudless day. One minute he's just Jesus; the next, his entire face was shining, and that dusty old tunic he always wears shimmered and shone.

But that wasn't all. I also saw Moses and Elijah – standing there talking to Jesus. It was amazing. And so, of course, I had lots of questions I wanted to ask them – I've heard their stories all my life, and there they stood, so close I could reach out and touch them. Was this really fulfillment of what had been predicted for so long?

So, I offered to build them each a tent, proper places to worship; we could all stay as long as necessary. Why rush into anything?

That's when things got really bizarre.

I was still talking and a bright cloud covered all three of them up. A very mysterious voice – and I don't think it was Jesus' – said: "This is my son whom I dearly love. I am very pleased with him." And

then the voice practically yelled (and I swear it was aimed directly at me): "LISTEN TO HIM."

My knees buckled, and I fell flat on the ground, trembling. It was a humbling, awesome moment I'll never forget. It was like being in the presence of the Almighty.

Jesus came over and tapped us on the shoulder. He told the three of us to get up and not be afraid. Easy for him to say. When I looked up, the only one there was Jesus. I don't know what happened to the other two.

Jesus led us back down the mountain but made us swear we wouldn't say a word about these strange happenings until the Human One was raised from the dead. He talks like that a lot – in riddles – we often have to ask him what he means. I'm pretty sure he's the One.

I do wish we could have stayed up there longer – basking in that brilliant light – and hearing more from that mysterious voice. The view was incredible – I even thought I saw the boat I left on Galilee. But Jesus never stays in one place. I should have known. When I chose to follow him, I left my boat and my other life behind.

Note to self: Next time – don't make ridiculous suggestions in the middle of a miracle. It's Jesus, Peter! Just. Follow. Him. Today was one of those days. I meant well. I really did.

Note to self: Next time – don't make ridiculous suggestions in the middle of a miracle. It's Jesus, Peter! Just. Follow. Him.

### **Dave:**

When I was a theology student, I tried to think too much about this passage, and my mark reflected the fact that I didn't get this story, then.

Now, I still don't get it. That's the point.

It is a moment of wonder. Peter wants to do something, say something, but nothing captures the power of the moment. He didn't get it. We humans are like that, aren't we. We overthink some things.

I've done it too many times in my life, getting into my head when I should just stay in my heart. Have you done that? Moments where probably all that the Creator wants from us is an open heart and mind, willing to just sit, and listen, and watch, and experience. That's all. Just be present in the moment.

Then those poor disciples have to go back to normal living.

Sickness. Economic woes. Relationship challenges. Well... life.

How do we carry with us that experience of wonder, back down the mountain? Did we allow ourselves to be changed somehow by that experience of wonder that we are pondering? What stops us from taking our gratitude and wonder from our experience of the transfiguration moments into our everyday living? Do we get too busy in everyday life? Do we hang onto bitterness like a badge of honour, survivors? Do we not say thank you enough in everyday life?

I want you to reflect on transfiguration moments in your life, moments of wonder and awe. Sit in that memory of the moment, feel it. What did you do next? Jot down words or doodle in images as you ponder those moments, and perhaps write down the things in your life that distract you from gratitude and wonder. (*silence*)

Hold onto that paper, those words or images, and offer them to your Creator in quiet prayer. May we, like Peter, learn to accept the holy gifts without overthinking, over-doing, rationalizing. Just receive the gift, say thank you, and then to show our gratitude in all that we do and say as we journey from that sacred place. Amen.

### **Choir Anthem: MV 106 *I Am the Dream***

1. I am the dream and you the dreamer.  
I am the song and you are the rhyme.  
You are the tune sung in ev'ry silence.  
You are the now in the endless stream of time.

2. I am the bell and you the silence.  
You are the yearning I cannot curtail.  
I am the blest and you the blessing.  
You are the wilds in which I lose my trail.

3. You are the word and I the echo.  
You are the leader and I am the led.  
You are the joy and I the laughter.  
You are the Rock on which I lay my head.

### **Minute for Mission**

#### **Protecting Love around the World: Michael Blair's Work**

Would you go to jail to proclaim your love? Would you be willing to die?

We are blessed to live in Canada, a country that recognizes the right to love whoever you want, regardless of their gender or sex. And while we haven't always done what is right, The United Church of Canada now recognizes that all love—including Two Spirit or LGBTQI+ relationships—is holy and blessed by God. But those rights do not exist in many parts of the world today.

"One of our partners in Kenya has advocated strongly for the human rights of sexual minorities, and that has caused him to be in jail, caused him to risk his life to be able to do that," says the Rev. Michael Blair. The church's first openly gay General Secretary is now helping to advocate for sexual and gender minorities in foreign countries. "When we hear these stories, we can see that this is a life and death matter."

Mission & Service plays a critical role in Blair's efforts. Your gifts help shelter refugees as they escape repressive governments. Same-sex attraction is a crime in 71 countries, and 11 of them have the death penalty. Mission & Service also holds consultations in other countries to discover how we can best work with our partners to protect sexual and gender minorities. "A few years ago, we hosted a consultation here in Canada with several partners and asked how we can be supportive of their work," Blair says. "They told us we needed to come and help in their context." To date, Mission & Service has supported consultations in Latin America and the Philippines.

"We are bringing together leaders to explore how the church can be a place of liberation and life for sexual and gender minorities in those communities. That is happening because of the folks who contribute to Mission & Service," says Blair.

Thank you for helping to protect sexual and gender minorities. You are saving lives and changing views around the world!

### **Offering Moment**

Thank you for sharing both your talents and treasures. Your donations will help St. Andrew's to partner with people who help the most vulnerable downtown. Giving to the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service allows us collectively to reach out to Ukraine and other places needing love and community. Thank you for all you do!!

### **Dedication Hymn: MV 191 *What Can I Do?***

What can I do? What can I bring?  
What can I say? What can I sing?  
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.  
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

### **Dedication Prayer**

Let us not keep our treasures stored in the mountaintops of our fears of how others might use them, but pour them out so they might be used to transform all those who find themselves in the valleys of hunger, of loss, of loneliness, and of injustice. This we ask in the name of your Beloved. Amen.

### **Prayers of Community**

In a world that is closed in, where we focus on only our own, seeing our own needs, we pray for a world that is open, looking outwards, seeing beyond ourselves.

Creator God,  
**may this be a holy transformation.**

In a world where the few hold so much power, where food and opportunity is so unfairly divided, we pray for a world that shares, recognizing each other's needs, and sharing each problem together. Creator God,  
**may this be a holy transformation.**

In a world where conflict is the chosen way, and might feeds every prejudice, we pray for a world that lives in peace, where differences are celebrated, and variety brings wholeness. Creator God,  
**may this be a holy transformation.**

In a world whose value is financial, and global warming the imagining of fools, we pray for a world that values what it has, and values its diversity and beauty, as a blessing from you. Creator God,  
**may this be a holy transformation.**

God, open us, our whole being, to your wisdom and love today, and every day. Open us to the heartbreak of our world, that our compassion may be shaped by your desire to heal this world, one person at a time. May we be the first to be healed, that we might become healers, seekers of wholeness and peace within our circles of influence. We pray now for our world, and ourselves, for all those people and places in our world rocked by tragedy, injustice, apathy, greed, tyranny, grief, and loss. *(silence)* Creator God,  
**may this be a holy Transformation.**

Amen.

### **Closing Hymn: VU 289 *It Only Takes a Spark***

1. It only takes a spark to get a fire going,  
and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing:  
that's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it:  
you spread God's love to everyone, you want to pass it on.
2. What a wondrous time is spring when all the trees are budding,  
the birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming;  
that's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it:  
you want to sing, it's fresh like spring, you want to pass it on.
3. I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found –  
on God you can depend, it matters not where you're bound;  
I'll shout it from the mountain top; I want the world to know:  
the Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.

### **Blessing**

God sends us from this experience of worship to serve all those around us.  
**We will go to take the light of hope into the shadowed corners in our midst.**

Jesus, the Beloved, invites us to join him in everyday life, in everyday service.  
**We will go to be blessed by all those overlooked by the world.**

Glory's Spirit takes us by the hand to lead us down path of humility.  
**We will enter into the mists of mistrust, so we can offer hope to many.**

### **Blessing Hymn: VU 646 *We Are Marching in the Light of God***

We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.

We are marching, oo-oo,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, oo-oo,  
we are marching in the light of God.

Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',  
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.  
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',  
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.  
Siyahamba, oo-oo,  
siyahamb', ekukhanyen', kwenkhos',  
Siyahamba, oo-oo,  
siyahamb', ekukhanyen', kwenkhos'.

We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, oo-oo,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, oo-oo,  
we are marching in the light of God.

## Postlude

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**Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, Journal Entry “Regrets”, Prayer after Scripture, and Prayers of Community** from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany. February 19, 2023. © 2022 Wood Lake Books Inc.

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