



# **Transfiguration of Our Lord**

**February 14, 2021    +    9:00 AM**

*Welcome to our worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on this feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord! Just as the Sundays after Epiphany began with Jesus' baptism, they end with three disciples' vision of His transfiguration. In Mark's story of Jesus' baptism, apparently only Jesus sees the Spirit descending and hears the words from heaven — but now Jesus' three closest friends hear the same words naming Him God's Beloved. And Paul reminds us that we can see the God-light in Jesus' face because the same God who created light in the first place has shone in our hearts to give us that vision. The light of God's glory in Jesus has enlightened us through Baptism and shines in us also for others to see.*

## **GATHERING**

### **GATHERING MUSIC**

**GATHERING HYMN:**                      **"Shine, Jesus, Shine!"**

**ELW 671**

*See page 13 of this bulletin for the music.*

#### **REFRAIN:**

***Shine, Jesus, shine— fill this land with the Father's glory!  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze— set our hearts on fire!  
Flow, river, flow— flood the nations with love and mercy!  
Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be light!***

***Lord, the light of Your love is shining in the midst of the darkness, shining.  
Jesus, Light of the World, shine upon us; set us free by the truth You now bring us.  
Shine on me; shine on me!***

*Refrain*

***As we gaze on Your kingly brightness, so our faces display Your likeness,  
Ever changing from glory to glory. Mirrored here, may our lives tell Your Story!  
Shine on me; shine on me!***

*Refrain*

## INVOCATION, CONFESSION, AND FORGIVENESS:

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to You all hearts are open, all desires known, and from You no secrets are hid.  
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy Name;  
through Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth's not in us.  
But if we confess our sins, God who's faithful and just  
will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  
So let's confess our sins against God and our neighbor:

*Silence is kept for reflection and personal confession.*

Most merciful God,

***we confess that we're in bondage to sin and can't free ourselves.  
We've sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we've done and by what we've left undone.  
We haven't loved You with our whole heart;  
we haven't loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.  
Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will  
and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy Name. Amen.***

Hear the Good News, my brothers and sisters:

Almighty God, in His mercy, has given His only Son to die for us,  
and for His sake forgives us all our sins.

Sp as a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by His authority,  
I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins,  
in the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## HYMN OF PRAISE: "Glory to God!"

*See page 14-15 of this bulletin for the music.*

**REFRAIN:**

***Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God in the highest!  
Glory to God! Glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth!***

***Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
We worship You; we give You thanks; we praise You for Your glory!***

*refrain*

***Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father; Lord God, Lamb of God:  
You take away the sin of the world— have mercy on us!  
You are seated at the right hand of the Father— receive our prayer!***

*refrain*

***For You alone are the Holy One; You alone are the Lord;  
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father! Amen!***

***Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God in the highest!  
Glory to God! Glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth,  
And peace to God's people on earth!***

## **GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

***And also with you.***

Then let's pray: Almighty God,  
the resplendent light of Your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts.  
Transfigure us and our world ever more fully into Your image  
through Your Son, Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever

***Amen.***

## **WORD AND PRAYER**

### **FIRST READING:**

**2 Kings 2.1-15**

**NLT**

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord's told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I'll never leave you!" So they went down together to Bethel.

<sup>3</sup> The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord's going to take your master away from you today?" "Of course, I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it."

<sup>4</sup>Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the Lord’s told me to go to Jericho.” But Elisha replied again, “As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I’ll never leave you.” So they went on together to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup>Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, “Did you know that the Lord’s going to take your master away from you today?” “Of course, I know,” Elisha answered. “But be quiet about it.”

<sup>6</sup>Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the Lord’s told me to go to the Jordan River.” But again Elisha replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I’ll never leave you.” So they went on together. <sup>7</sup>Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. <sup>8</sup>Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup>When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I’m taken away.” And Elisha replied, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor.” <sup>10</sup>“You’ve asked a difficult thing,” Elijah replied. “If you see me when I’m taken from you, then you’ll get your request. But if not, then you won’t.”

<sup>11</sup>As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup>Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!” And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress. <sup>13</sup>He picked up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then he returned to the bank of the Jordan River. <sup>14</sup>He struck the water with Elijah’s cloak and cried out, “Now where’s the Lord, the God of Elijah?” Then the river divided, and Elisha went across. <sup>15</sup>When the group of prophets from Jericho saw from a distance what happened, they exclaimed, “Elijah’s spirit rests upon Elisha!”

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

***Thanks be to God!***

## **SECOND READING:**

## **2 Corinthians 4.3-6**

**NLT**

*St Paul writes:* <sup>3</sup>If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it’s hidden only from people who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>Satan, the “god” of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They’re unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who’s the exact likeness of God.

<sup>5</sup> You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that's seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

***Thanks be to God!***

## **THE HOLY GOSPEL:**

**Mark 9.2-9**

**NLT**

***Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

The Holy Gospel according to St Mark, the ninth chapter.

***Glory to You, O Lord!***

<sup>2</sup> Six days *after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah*, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, <sup>3</sup> and His clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. <sup>4</sup> Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials— one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified.

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My dearly loved Son. Listen to Him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. <sup>9</sup> As they went back down the mountain, He told them not to tell anyone what they'd seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

***Praise to You, O Christ!***

## **PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: "Oh, Wondrous Image, Vision Fair!"**

***ELW 316***

*See page 16 of this bulletin for the music.*

>

*Oh, wondrous image, vision fair of glory that the Church may share,  
Which Christ upon the mountain shows, where brighter than the sun He glows!*

*With Moses and Elijah nigh, th' incarnate Lord holds converse high,  
And from the cloud, the Holy One says, "This is My beloved Son!"*

*With shining face and bright array, Christ deigns to manifest today  
What glory shall be theirs above who joy in God with perfect love.*

*And faithful hearts are raised on high by this great vision's mystery;  
For which in joyful song we raise the voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.*

*O Father, with th' eternal Son, and Holy Spirit, ever one,  
We pray You, bring us by Your grace to see Your glory face to face.*

## **APOSTLES CREED:**

Let's confess our faith together in the words of our baptismal creed:

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*

*He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.*

*He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again.*

*He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

*He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,*

*the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,*

*the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:**

And now let's pray for the Church, the world, and all those in need:

Good and gracious God, we give You thanks for Your transfiguring love which still shines from Your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. Enlighten Your people throughout the world and help us to listen to Your Son and walk in His way of mercy and compassion.

You pour out Your Holy Spirit upon young and old alike. Let Your light shine in the hearts of every member of our congregation, and send us forth to carry the light of Your grace to all around us.

Your creative love shines in every growing thing that stretches toward the sun. Restore Your creation to vibrancy and beauty, and open our eyes to behold Your splendor in all the works of Your hands.

Though we seek Your glory in the dazzle of splendor, You reveal Your glory most truly in the suffering of Your Son. Humble the hearts of our national and world leaders by the power of His example; quiet the arrogance of groups and nations that would manifest itself in domination and destruction; and still the storms of violence and terror in every land, that Your peace and abundant grace may prevail for all.

Your self-giving, life-giving love shining forth from the face of Christ is reflected in the love we have for one another. Bless us and our companions who accompany us on our journeys of life, that our love may grow every more fully into the likeness of Christ's. And where covenants of love have been wounded or broken, heal our divisions by the power of Your Spirit; mend our broken relationships, and bring peace to our families, to our community, to our nation, and to the world.

Your Word of life pierces the darkness of our confusion and self-condemnation with the grace that makes us a new creation in Christ. Have mercy on those who struggle daily with mental illness of every kind, that through the fog of their struggle they may hear Your voice of love and rise in the strength of Your promise to the joy of life in Your presence.

You're the strength of the sick and the suffering, the lonely and the forgotten. Let the light of Your healing dawn upon those who suffer in any way, especially... that they may behold Christ's resurrection taking shape in their own renewal of life and rise to join all Your people in singing Your praise.

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Your saints shine with the glory that radiates from the face of Your beloved Son. Grant that our own lives may radiate Your grace and mercy, and at the last, gather us with all Your saints in Your presence on Your holy mountain.

For into Your hands, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy through Christ Jesus our Lord.

***Amen.***

The peace of the Lord is with you always.

***And also with you.***

*Reconciled to God and one another, let's share with one another a sign of God's peace.*

# MEAL

## THE OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

### OFFERTORY HYMN: “Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful”

*See page 17-18 of this bulletin for the music for this section.*

*Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing.  
Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gather the hopes and the dreams of all; unite them with the prayers we offer now.  
Grace our table with Your presence, Lord, and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.*

O God, receive these gifts as You receive us:  
like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide.  
Nourish us anew in Your tender care, and empower us in faithful service  
to tend to others with this same love, through Christ Jesus our saving grace. **Amen.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING:

The Lord is with you.	<b><i>And also with you.</i></b>
Lift up your hearts!	<b><i>We lift them to the Lord!</i></b>
Let's give thanks to the Lord our God.	<b><i>It's right to give our thanks and praise!</i></b>

It's indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should always and everywhere  
give thanks and praise to You, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord!  
Sharing our life, He lived among us to reveal Your glory and love,  
that our darkness should give way to His own brilliant light.  
And so with the Church on earth and the whole company of heaven,  
we praise Your Name and join their unending hymn:

*See page 15 of this bulletin for the music.*

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
Heav'n and earth are full of Your glory! Hosanna in the highest!  
Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!***



*As the Pastor says these Words of Institution, take hold of first the bread, then the cup:*

In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread,  
gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying,  
“Take and eat. This is My body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me.”  
Again after supper He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink,  
saying “This cup is the new covenant in My blood shed for you and for all people  
for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of Me.”

Remembering, therefore, His life and His death, His resurrection and His ascension,  
we await His coming in glory.

Now pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us,  
that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all Your people  
in the body of Your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

For through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is Yours, almighty Father, now and forever! **Amen.**

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name!  
Thy Kingdom 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 Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever! Amen.***

## **CANTICLE:                   “Lamb of God”**

***Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us!  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us!  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace!***

## **THE HOLY COMMUNION**

*Now we share God’s consecrated gifts among God’s consecrated people, knowing that our living Lord Jesus is fully present with us in His Supper, giving Himself to us in bread and wine and forgiving love. When giving the bread to your neighbor, say “**The body of Christ, given for you.**” When giving the wine/grape juice say, “**The blood of Christ, shed for you.**” Whatever’s left over may be reverently eaten and drunk by everyone after our worship is over. Once we’ve all shared in the body and blood of Christ, we continue in blessing and prayer:*

# SENDING

## THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER:

May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ  
strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

**Amen.**

*See page 18 of this bulletin for the music.*

***Thankful hearts and voices raise; tell everyone what God has done!  
Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and bear Christ's holy Name!  
Send us with Your promises, O God, and lead us forth in joy  
With shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia!***

Let's pray: Christ Jesus, at this table we've feasted on Your very life  
and are strengthened for our journey.

Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit  
to proclaim Your Good News and serve others in Your name.

**Amen.**

## BENEDICTION:

And now may God our Creator shine the light of glory into your hearts;  
may Christ Jesus be with you and never leave you;  
may the Holy Spirit renew God's own image within you;  
and almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

## SENDING HYMN:

**"How Good, Lord, to Be Here!" ELW 315**

*See p. 19 of this bulletin for the music.*

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

***How good, Lord, to be here, Your beauty to behold  
Where Moses and Elijah stand, Your messengers of old.***

***Fulfiller of the past and hope of things to be,  
We hail Your body glorified and our redemption see.***

***Before we taste of death, we see Your Kingdom come;  
We long to hold the vision bright and make this hill our home.***

*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.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISMISSAL:**

God has a plan.

*We're it!*

What's our part in God's plan?

*Sharing God's love in joyful service!*

Then let's go in peace, live in joy, and serve the Lord!

*Thanks be to God!*

### **Acknowledgements**

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For 40 years Moses  
passed by the burning bush  
not seeing 'til one fateful day.

Elisha did not see  
the fiery chariot  
until Elijah  
went his way.

And how often did Peter,  
and James, and John  
behold the miracles  
of the Christ?

But it took two visions  
on Tabor and Golgotha  
to change  
their entire lives.

And what of us  
as daily sunlight surrounds  
yet, we do not see  
that life is truly profound?

And like Emily  
in "Our Town",  
it takes death  
to turn us around.

Our eyes are blind  
until we are free  
from all the clutter,  
and then we attend  
to the true miracle  
and what really matters...

- *Kenneth Storck*

# Shine, Jesus, Shine!

*Refrain*

Shine, Je - sus, shine, fill this land with the Fa-ther's glo - ry;  
 blaze, Spir - it, blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
 Flow, riv - er, flow, flood the na - tions with grace and mer - cy;  
 send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!

1 Lord, the light of your love is shin - ing, in the midst of the  
 2 As we gaze on your king - ly bright-ness, so our fac - es dis -

dark - ness, shin - ing; Je - sus, light of the world, shine up - on us,  
 play your like - ness, ev - er chang - ing from glo - ry to glo - ry,  
 set us free by the truth you now bring us.  
 mir - rored here, may our lives tell your sto - ry.

*Refrain*

Shine on me, shine on me:  
 Shine on me, shine on me:

Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950  
 Music: Graham Kendrick  
 Instrumental music © 1987 Make Way Music, admin. Music Services in the Western Hemisphere

SHINE, JESUS, SHINE  
 9 9 10 10 3 3 and refrain

# Glory to God!



☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



☐ Lord God, heav-en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



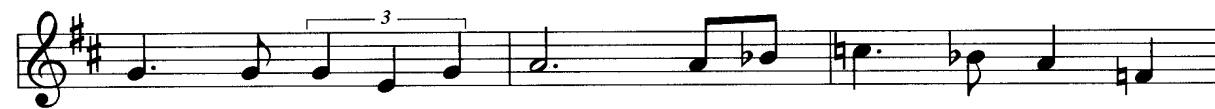
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



☐ Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

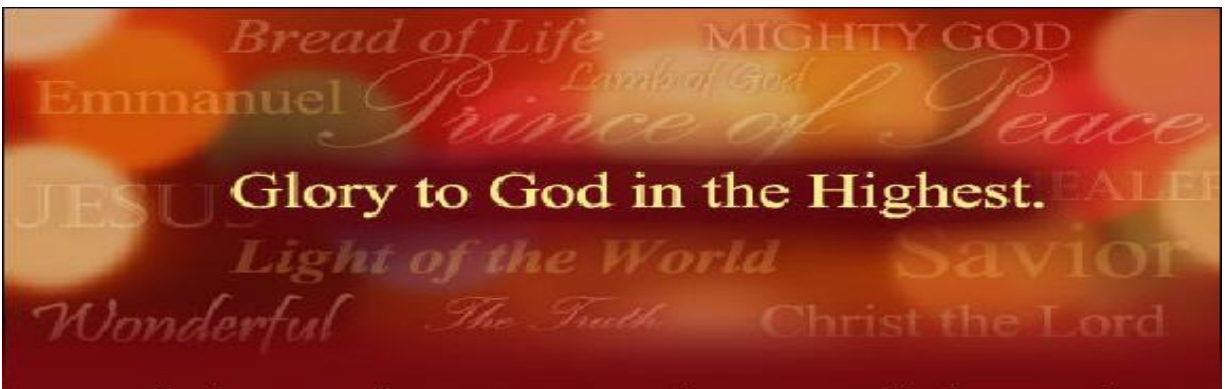


world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.

☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;  
 glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.  
 ☐ For you a-lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,  
 you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it,  
 in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.  
 ☐ Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;  
 glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth,  
 and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



# Oh, Wondrous Image, Vision Fair



1 Oh, won - drous im - age, vi - sion fair of  
 2 With Mo - ses and E - li - jah nigh the in -  
 3 With shin - ing face and bright ar - ray, Christ  
 4 And faith - ful hearts are raised on high by  
 5 O Fa - ther, with the e - ter - nal Son, and



glo - ry that the church may share, which Christ up - on the  
 car - nate Lord holds con - verse high, and from the cloud, the  
 deigns to man - i - fest to - day what glo - ry shall be  
 this great vi - sion's mys - ter - y; for which in joy - ful  
 Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er one, we pray you, bring us



moun-tain shows, where bright - er than the sun he glows!  
 Ho - ly One says, "This is my be - lov - ed Son."  
 theirs a - bove who joy in God with per - fect love.  
 song we raise the voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.  
 by your grace to see your glo - ry face to face.

Text: Sarum, 15th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.  
 Music: DEO GRACIAS, English ballad, 15th cent.



# Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful, Lord

Let the vine-yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown,  
that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we  
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, Lord,  
and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

The musical score is written on six staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Let the vine-yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, Lord, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come." The score ends with a double bar line.

# Holy, Holy, Holy Lord

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of  
pow-er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your  
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The musical score is written on three staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est." The score ends with a double bar line.



Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Ho - san - na in the high - est, Ho -

san - na in the high - est.

## Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise

☐ Thank - ful hearts and voic - es raise; tell ev - 'ry -

one what God has done. Let all who seek the

Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.

Send us with your prom - is - es, O God,

and lead us forth in joy with shouts

of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia.

(Lent) A - men, a - men.

# How Good, Lord, to Be Here!



1 How good, Lord, to be here! Your glo - ry fills the night;  
2 How good, Lord, to be here, your beau - ty to be - hold  
3 Ful - fill - er of the past and hope of things to be,  
4 Be - fore we taste of death, we see your king - dom come;  
5 How good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not re - main;



your face and gar - ments, like the sun, shine with un - bor - rowed light.  
where Mo - ses and E - li - jah stand, your mes - sen - gers of old.  
we hail your bod - y glo - ri - fied and our re - demp - tion see.  
we long to hold the vi - sion bright and make this hill our home.  
but since you bid us leave the mount, come with us to the plain.

Text: Joseph A. Robinson, 1858–1933, alt.

Music: POTSDAM, W. Mercer, *The Church Psalter and Hymn Book*, 1854



# When Everything Changes

This week, we celebrate Transfiguration Sunday, the apex of the season of Epiphany. Accordingly, our lectionary readings are full of strange wonders: fiery chariots, dazzling clothes, magic mantles, blinding clouds. In our Old Testament reading, Elijah ascends to heaven in a spectacular whirlwind. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals His divinity on a light-soaked mountaintop. There's nothing subtle about either of these stories. After the hints and glimmers we experienced during Epiphany, today we stand with undimmed eyes and witness God's glory in its fullness.

But here's the strange thing: these aren't happy stories. As miraculous and radiant as they are, each story conveys bewilderment and loss. Why? Because embedded in each is a **threshold**, a change, a boundary line marking a "before" and an "after." And let's face it: we human beings rarely cross thresholds without hesitation. Sometimes we cross over in grief, already pining for what we're leaving behind. Sometimes we move forward in fear, convinced that whatever lies ahead will be beyond our capacity to handle. Sometimes we refuse to cross over at all until raw, wrenching necessity forces us to put one foot in front of the other.

I don't believe that our hesitation makes us unspiritual or unworthy. It makes us human and cautious. But what this week's lectionary teaches us is that **thresholds are essential to the life of faith**. Risky as it is, crossing over is what keeps our faith dynamic. Without thresholds, without evolution, without change, we die.

To appreciate what's at stake in this week's Old Testament reading, we need some backstory. In 2 Kings, Elijah calls Elisha as his heir and acolyte when Elisha is still a young man, dutifully plowing his father's fields. Directed by God, Elijah walks out into the muddy fields, wraps his cloak around Elisha's shoulders, and calls him away to a new vocation.

Seven or eight good years go by. During this time, Elisha becomes Elijah's shadow, following his teacher around out of love, admiration, and a keen eagerness to learn anything his mentor will teach him. Their bond is so strong and so well known that when the time draws near for their parting, Elijah and the established community of prophets try in concert to help Elisha say goodbye.

"I need to take the next step of this journey alone," Elijah tells his acolyte three separate times in this week's reading. "No, I won't leave you," Elisha stubbornly insists, clinging all the harder. "Do you know the Lord's about to take your master?" the other prophets ask Elisha, hoping he'll accept the inevitable before it's too late. "Shut up!" is Elisha's gracious reply.

Elisha reacts exactly as we might if we were standing upon a threshold— a threshold of vocation, of identity, of readiness, of relationship. Everything he's known is about to change, and he's filled with pain and bewilderment. Can he trust his prophetic calling in the absence of Elijah's reassuring presence? Can he learn to decipher the voice of God on his own, without an experienced translator at his side? Can he, a loyal and eager follower, become a leader instead?

I imagine these are questions we understand too well. Regardless of the particulars, we all know what it's like to get used to one way of being in the world— one way of knowing God, one way of practicing our vocations, one way of relating to our families, one way of “doing” church, faith, and religion. By the time Elijah's ascension draws near, his student Elisha is well entrenched in finding both his God and his purpose through his mentor. He can't bear the thought of having that safety net ripped away. Who'll God become in Elijah's absence? Who'll Elisha become if he's forced to step into spiritual adulthood, if he's forced to evolve?

In this story, as in our lives, there's no way to avoid the thresholds that God appoints. The chariots come, the whirlwind descends, and Elijah leaves his bereft student behind. Looking back across the centuries that separate me from this fiery display of God's power, I wonder: What did the drama accomplish— the fire, the wind, the horses? Were the fireworks for Elijah, headed to God's presence with all its cosmos-altering wonders? Or was Elisha the one who needed to understand, right from the beginning of his career, that God's glorious unveilings come at a price, that epiphanies aren't be-alls and cure-alls... that spiritual maturity requires crossing from certainty to faith, from light to shadow, from power to vulnerability? Elisha saw God's glory, that's for sure. But he also saw a point of no return, and his response was neither gratitude nor joy. He tore his clothes and grieved.

I know few scenes in the Bible more poignant than the one that ends this story. As quickly as the divine vision comes, it departs. There's no afterglow, no surge of prophetic authority or knowledge as Elisha lies grieving in the dust— only silence, only loss, only questions...

Why? Because it's not the vision that saves Elisha. The vision is glorious, of course, but divine wonders alone don't save anyone. Elisha's salvation comes in the long silence *after* the glory. It comes when he still has no idea whether Elijah's “double portion” of God's spirit will rest on him or not. It comes when he chooses to stand up, shoulder his grief, take up his teacher's mantle, and cross the threshold into a new and unfamiliar life.

It's clear from the details in the story that this choice is neither easy nor inevitable. But the decision Elisha makes bears witness to the faith epiphanies can forge in us when we make the hard choice to cross over. A battered faith, a trembling faith, a scorched faith— *that's* the faith that yields abundant life.

The second threshold story in this week's readings, that of Jesus' Transfiguration, is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels. Over the centuries, it's steadily accumulated meanings, most of them thickly theological. Growing up, I was taught that the Transfiguration is important because it reveals Christ's divine nature, foreshadows His death, secures His place in the stream of Israel's salvific history, and prefigures His Resurrection.

All of this is true and important. But for me, the story pivots around Peter, James, and John, the three terrified disciples who witness Jesus's transfiguration and just about lose their minds...

Like Elisha, these friends of Jesus have spent years following Him around, listening to His teachings, and witnessing His miracles. By the time Jesus invites them to the mountaintop, they have good reason to believe they know their Master. They know Him as a teacher, a storyteller, a healer, and a traveling companion. His face, His manners, His mission are all familiar to them—familiar, endearing, and safe.

But then, on the mountain, the unimaginable happens. Before their very eyes, Jesus changes, becoming at once both fully Himself and fully strange. And suddenly, just like Elisha, Jesus' stunned disciples find themselves standing on a threshold. The Man they thought they knew is suddenly more, suddenly Other. And the path that lies ahead of Him— a path that must end on another high place, a hill called Golgotha— upends everything the disciples think they understand about Jesus.

In other words, one phase of their life and their comprehension is ending. What'll it look like to begin another? They've journeyed with Jesus the minister, the rabbi, the healer. Will they now journey with Him towards the cross? Or will they insist, as Peter briefly does in his fear and confusion, on remaining exactly where they are, sedentary and safe?

On Transfiguration Sunday, we come to the end of another liturgical season. Having seen the lights of Epiphany, we prepare now for the long shadows of Lent. I don't know what thresholds we'll encounter in the wilderness. I don't know how God might invite us to change, to grow, to cross over. And I don't know what losses and sorrows those crossings will include. But if this week's stories bear witness to something true about the life of faith, then we can trust in the God who invites us to cross over. Resurrection is ours on the other side...

• *Debie Thomas*

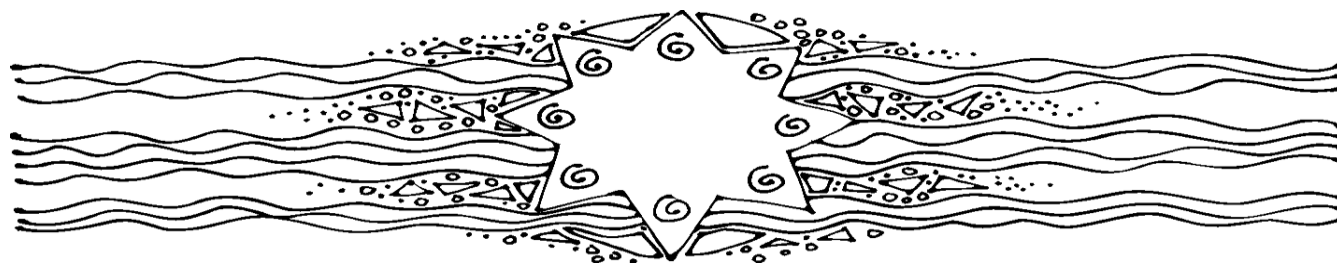


# This Week at St Paul's

P = Parish House, F = Fellowship Hall

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<b>Sun. 2/14</b> <b>Transfiguration</b> <b>of Our Lord</b>  (Valentine's Day)	9:00 AM	Holy Communion online: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live">www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live</a>
	10:30 AM	Fellowship Hour via Zoom: [use meeting ID 839 381 0896, passcode 90e8Dm]
	2:00 PM	Scouts BSA Troop 007 outside
	6:00 PM	Confirmation Class via Zoom *
<b>Mon. 2/15</b>	7:00 PM	Congregation Council via Zoom *
<b>Tues. 2/16</b>	5:30 PM	Worship and Music Team via Zoom/FCC *
<b>Wed. 2/17</b> <b>Ash Wednesday</b>	7:00 PM	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion online: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live">www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live</a>
<b>Thur. 2/18</b>	10:00 AM	Bible Study via Zoom/FCC *
<b>Fri. 2/19</b>	1:00 PM	Al-Anon
	7:00 PM	AA
<b>Sun. 2/21</b> <b>Lent 1</b>	9:00 AM	Holy Communion online: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live">www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live</a>
	10:30 AM	Fellowship Hour via Zoom: [use meeting ID 839 381 0896, passcode 90e8Dm]
	2:00 PM	Scouts BSA Troop 007 outside
	6:00 PM	Confirmation Class via Zoom *

- \* If you'd like to participate in these **activities taking place over Pr Dave's Zoom platform**, go to [zoom.us](http://zoom.us), click "Join a Meeting" at the top right of the page, use meeting ID 3700147169, and if it asks for a password, use 119805 and you should be in. If you're using your phone, these dial-in numbers will work: 929.205.6099 or 312.626.6799. After you dial, you'll be asked for the host's code, and you'll type in 3700147169#, then 119805# and you're in. (What's more, with your smart phone or computer, you can engage video as well as audio, so we can see and hear you—something that's precious right now!) You can also use **Free Conference Call [FCC]**: Dial 857.232.0157, enter conference code 144261, and you're in.



## The Transfiguration Of Our Lord



### **REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK:**

- The Armed Forces, Crossroads Pregnancy Care, David Johnson Sr., Andrew Edmonds, Fay Barndt, Morgan, Ally, Dontay, & Emily Hassler, President Biden and his cabinet, Don & Karen Ludovici, Barbara Graser, Jordan Scholl, Kelsey Shaak, Bob Knapp, Ray Constable, Walter Rausch, Bob Westervelt, Carol Marks, Rosemary Bruno, Florence Zellers, Nick Wildman, Walt & Ryan, Bobby Lane, Alan & Kathy West, Aly Brown, Connie Slotter, Doug Fay, Karen Berger, Gary Kratz, Jim, Pr Susan Lynch, Pr Wanda Schwandt, Barb Fehnel, Sheena Lakjer, Larry Noblit, Stan Johnson, Jan Riley, Sam Sovacol, Karen Blitch, Mattie Bleam, Samantha Martin, Jeannie Rothsching, Marie Shaw, Tammy Zepiora, Kevin Schrantz, Beth, Norm Diehl Sr., Annabelle Weller, Bill Shaeffer, Adrienne Shaeffer and Misha, the Hallman family, Bob & Phyllis Labs, Roger & Tanner Banks, Amy Miller, Erika, Linda & Pat Knowlten, Owen & Siobhan; victims of flooding, hurricanes, earthquakes, and wildfires; everyone struggling with COVID-19 and its containment.
- Families and friends of Bill Stever, Bill Barndt Sr., Robert Webb, Karl Gross, Kara L, Jane, Bill Blain, Carole Eddings, George Dutton, Jamie Wright, Eric McGovern.

***This week's bulletins*** are given to the glory of God by Robert and Cheryl Ball in loving memory of Lynford Runner.

We'd hoped to resume in-person worship at St Paul's by now— but because a new and powerful surge of the COVID-19 pandemic has befallen us recently, we're ***postponing returning to in-person indoor worship*** until it's safer for us to gather. We'll continue to livestream our worship via Facebook Live and host our fellowship hour via Zoom, so hang in there with us.

Please ***don't forget to keep on giving to our ministries here at St Paul's!*** You can now do this in several ways: [1] If you're already signed up for Simply Giving, you're already taken care of; [2] You can mail your offerings to the church; and now [3] You can go to our church website ([www.stpaulsqtown.org](http://www.stpaulsqtown.org)) and make your contributions online. Whatever way you choose, your contributions help us continue to serve our congregation and community and build upon the good things God's doing through us.

This Wednesday, ***Feb. 17 @ 7:00 PM***, we'll begin the holy and solemn season of ***Lent*** with the livestreaming of our annual ***Ash Wednesday Eucharist*** from St Paul's ([www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live](http://www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live)). This beginning of our wilderness journey will feature an extended confession of sins, the imposition of ashes, and the sharing of Holy Communion— and our brothers and sisters from Christ UCC in Trumbauersville will be sharing with us in this service as well. You'll want to be sure to have your home altar ready with bread and wine, perhaps a candle and/or a cross, and of course, some ashes. (See the article in our newsletter for some ideas on how to prepare the ashes—or an alternative to ashes...)

Come join us each week for our ***Thursday Morning Bible Study*** from ***10:00 AM-12:00 NN*** via Zoom or Free Conference call. (See the previous page for information on accessing these platforms.) We're digging into the Scripture readings for the upcoming week to discover the treasures that await us come Sunday. You don't have to be a biblical "expert" to get a lot out of this study— so come join us and invite your friends as well!

Come join our Synod's Anti-Racism Team for a book discussion series on Debbie Irving's **Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race**. These discussions will take place on Monday evenings from 6:30-8:00 PM via Zoom. Topics include:

- January 25 "Beginning your racial autobiography"
- February 1 "What is race?"
- February 8 "What is racism?"
- February 15 "Where do we go from here?"

For more information, and to register for this free series, email [antiracism@sepa.org](mailto:antiracism@sepa.org).

Our "**Monthly Special**" benevolence recipient is **Lutheran Disaster Response**. As their website says, "Lutheran Disaster Response brings God's hope, healing, and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need." LDR has helped with hurricanes, refugee crises in the Middle East, US wildfires, US severe storms, COVID- 19, US tornadoes, US flooding, South Sudan relief, and AMMPARO, which protects migrant minors— and a number of our own folks from St Paul's have personally assisted with these disaster response efforts in the past! For more information, please go to their website [www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response).

**Bakers Needed:** Do you like to bake? Sue Young is coordinating bakers to supply treats to help support the AA "Let Go and Let God" group meeting each Friday at St. Paul's. She's hoping to add a couple more bakers to those who already participate in this ministry. If you're interested, please contact Sue Young at 610.982.5541 or [sueyoung751@gmail.com](mailto:sueyoung751@gmail.com). Thank you!

Our Southeast Penn Synod's annual **Tuscarora Lutheran Youth Retreat** will be held **via Zoom** on Saturday, **April 10 beginning at 10:00 AM** for youth in grades 6-12 and their leaders. For those who've been to the in-person Tuscarora Lutheran Youth Retreat (formerly Harvey Cedars), you know how engaging and inspirational this retreat is—and though the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us to do things differently, it's still going to be a great event. For more information and to register, go to [tuscaroralutheranretreat.weebly.com/](http://tuscaroralutheranretreat.weebly.com/). Registration fee is \$20 per person; deadline to register is March 7.

*For more information on our ministries, please contact:*

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