

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Transfiguration of Jesus

27th February



The Transfiguration of Jesus ~ Fra Angelico

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

And all of us, with unveiled faces,
seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror,
are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another;
for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3

Prayer - Bearers of reconciliation

from Brother Roger, Taizé

Lord Christ,
at times we are like strangers on this earth,
disconcerted by all the violence and harsh oppositions.
Like a gentle breeze,
you breathe upon us the Spirit of peace.
Transfigure the deserts of our doubts
and so prepare us to be bearers of reconciliation
wherever you place us,
that the hope of peace may arise in our world. Amen.

Exodus 34 27-35

The Lord said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. Moses was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

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. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterwards all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him



on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 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, 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.

Moses with the tablets

Marc Chagall

2 Corinthians 3 9 – 4.2

Now if the ministry of death, chiselled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? ...

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

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.

Luke 9. 18-27

Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' They answered, 'John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'The Messiah of God.'

He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, 'The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'

Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure [exodus], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 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. 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. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' 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.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.

Reflecting

When it comes to the religious life, the abiding and fundamental question is so often: what is God like? What is the nature of God? And what does God have to say about human persons and their relations with God and with each other?

While we may not usually ask this question so directly, the eternal religious predicament is that there are always some who set themselves up as authoritative in these matters – and are inclined to wag the finger and coerce others into their take on what God wants. Heavens, I stumbled on some earnest young man on the internet this week with loopy views about COVID 19, vaccines and God's plans for the world. He began to quote scripture ad infinitum to prove his case. Some would have been sucked in, I expect.

Really, what we have going in the gospel reading today is an interplay of authoritative figures trying to establish Jesus' credentials – in order to be able to say: Jesus is the one who can speak with authority about the nature and the way of God. Definitely.

Jesus asks the disciples: who do the crowds say that I am? What's the popular view about who I am? Clearly the crowds experience Jesus as authoritative; maybe he is Elijah or one of the prophets. But who do you say that I am, Jesus asks? You are The Anointed One of God, says Peter. This is what the Jewish title Messiah means: the anointed one. And the term Christ is simply the Greek rendering of the Jewish word Messiah. So, Peter says: you are The Anointed One of God. What could be a clearer affirmation than this?

Then Jesus tells the disciples 'The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.' The title Son of Man literally translates the Greek words "The Human One". This anointed one of God is also the human one; mortal, vulnerable, exhibiting all the characteristics of what being human involves.

What Jesus tells the disciples is that he is going to be rejected by the ones who speak authoritatively about God: the elders, the chief priests, the scribes. These are the ones who have set themselves up– they say – to protect the legacy of Moses and Elijah. These religious authorities say they interpret and protect and enforce the legacy of these key figures.

But now Luke gives us, as all the Gospel writers do, a divine display of chosen-ness; Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus in a theophany on the mountain in which Jesus is transfigured, as Moses was transfigured from being in the presence of God for forty days. The disciples witness it, misunderstand it, but witness it and will later comprehend what this event means for them and for the world. 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' As the voice from heaven confirms for Jesus at his baptism the path and the ministry he is to follow, so here on the mountain in the cloud the voice confirms for the disciples that Jesus' path, Jesus' way is God's way: This is my son, my chosen; listen to him! By inference, don't listen to those who have set themselves up as authoritative.

This week Vladimir Putin has taken a certain authority to himself, setting the world's nerves on edge. Where will this Cold-War, ex-KGB agent's power grab end. What ends will he go to to expand Russia back into old Soviet territories. He utters the rhetoric of freedom, but it is a lie. He suggests there is genocide taking place in Ukraine, but there is no evidence of this.

It is human to spread lies and untruths abroad to get people's attention and loyalty; allegiances which are too often rooted in fear and anxiety. Too often religious leaders speak, seeking to provoke people's fears. This is what Jesus came to disabuse us of; that God is love and sees us with eyes of mercy. As Moses was told by God: I have seen my people's suffering – go and set them free.

As Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah, we are told they speak with him of the exodus he is about to accomplish. This is the Greek word which is used: exodus. It links Jesus with Moses and his great mission of liberation of the slaves in Egypt. Often the theology we are given of what Jesus 'achieved' on the cross is that he saved us. But the movement in this couplet of stories – the great declaration and the Transfiguration- is that Jesus opens a way, like Moses opened a way, out from slavery to liberation, along which we may follow. Jesus tells the disciples – and indeed us – to take up our cross and follow him. This is the path.

As next week we move into Lent and begin the journey to the cross we may do so with eyes opened for signs of this path that Jesus takes and how that path may give us clues about the journeys to our own crosses. As we pass this way, may it be a path to freedom and joy for us.

Prayers of the people – prepared by Mardie Townsend

Holy God, your Son Jesus Christ was transfigured in glory and majesty; we ask for your transforming grace for all of your creation.

We pray for the re-creation of your fragmented world. We think of those in situations of conflict: from a global level right through to a personal level. Today especially we pray for the people of Ukraine. Lord, grant wisdom and courage to the leaders of nations attempting to find resolution to this terrible conflict, and grant compassion among national leaders so that those who flee the conflict may find safe havens.

Loving God, make us agents of your transforming grace, and, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray too for the victims of family violence, abuse of all kinds and discrimination on the basis of race, creed or sexuality. Help us to recognise all as your loved people and inspire us to do all we can to eliminate violence, abuse and discrimination and to promote unity in diversity.

Loving God, make us agents of your transforming grace, and, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we emerge from our Covid bunkers, we pray for the re-shaping of our communities so that we do not return to the dichotomies of haves and have-nots, cared-for and neglected, accepted and rejected. Transform us and inspire us to work for the transformation of the structures of our society to provide care where there has been neglect, hope where there has been despair and acceptance where there has been rejection.

Loving God, make us agents of your transforming grace, and, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for your healing of all who are in trouble or need this day: the lonely, the sick, those in pain, the bereaved. We pray especially today for the family of Raie Lee. Where there is loneliness, may we be agents of friendship; where there is illness or pain, bring healing; where there is grief, bring consolation.

Loving God, make us agents of your transforming grace, and, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

And now let us join together in the prayer Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

Amen

Blessing

And all of us, with unveiled faces,
seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror,
are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another;

God the Father make you holy in his love;
God the Son enrich you with his grace;
God the Holy Spirit strengthen you with joy;
the Lord bless you and keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

Rev. Andrew Boyle

Office: 0411 958 127; Mobile 0409 869 009; Email: ajmboyle@outlook.com

Music Director: Mr Peter Hurley

Administrator: Mrs Cathy O'Connor
Fridays, 9am-5.00pm – 0411 958 127
office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS AND NOTICES

DEATH OF RAIE LEE – We are saddened to announce the death of Raie Lee early on the morning of Friday 25th. Raie was 95 years of age and had been resident in Vasey Brighton for more than two years. Details of her funeral, which will be held in the church, will be sent by email early this coming week. Please remember Dianne and Rod and families as they grieve and prepare to give thanks for her life.

PANCAKES IN THE PARK! - have been cancelled due to the death of Raie Lee.

THIS CUP WE BLESS

This coming Wednesday 3rd March is Ash Wednesday when we commence Lent. This Lent we are providing members of the congregation with the devotional resource This Cup We Bless by Michael McGirr. You will remember we used an Advent resource by him in 2020 – Doorways into Hope and Jo for Advent and Christmas.

Michael draws on the image of the cup as the basis of each day's reflections through the forty days and the Sundays of Lent. The cup is an image which occurs in many places throughout our scriptures. Michael writes:

Lent is the period before Easter in which we ask ourselves what really sustains us in our lives ... it is a time to really taste what is in the cup life presents us.

These are questions we can sit with and ponder in a sustained way over the Season. Michael reminds us that cups are an ever-present part of the course of each day, vessels for our sustenance, ritual containers for pausing in moments of joy, of reflection, of celebration, of revitalisation. As you stop for a cuppa through Lent you can pick up the day's reflection, as we all make our way toward Jerusalem with Jesus.

We trust that each day will be enriched by the reflections.

PATHFINDER MATERIAL REMINDER

Hi Everyone,

The next edition of Pathfinder will be available from the first weekend in Lent (Friday 4 March) - **contributions are due Monday 28 Feb (next Monday).**

Please remember to send us dates for March and April. Please let us know when your group is meeting and preferably where.

Also - what's happening? Is there something you've been thinking about and would like to contribute some thoughts, insights, questions, etc.

Looking forward to lots of contributions.

Dianne & Gary

WORSHIP DURING THE DEMOLITION PHASE

Zoom Services continue while the church is out-of-bounds until the demolition is finished. Please email the office or check website <https://www.ormondunitingchurch.org/> if needing to request access to the Zoom link.

MEETING UP DURING THE “DEMOLITION PHASE”

Last year the Formation Group made a commitment to offer a time to meet together, chew the fat and enjoy each other’s company during the time that we are unable to be together in worship.

We'll meet in **Allnutt Park (Wheatley Road McKinnon) - Sundays at 6.00pm.**
(see planned schedule of contacts below).

BYO dinner, drink, and chairs. Following are the dates and the contact names of those who will be able to tell you about changes should the weather hamper the events.

6 March - Ron and Mardie Townsend

20 March - David and Heather Baxter

Heather (for the Formation Group)

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Coatesville Uniting Church – UCAF, have sent an invitation to their World Day of Prayer on **Friday 4 March at 1.30pm.** If anyone would like to take part in this event, please contact Jan Davenport on 9578 1713.

JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL MISSION CONVENTION

April 30 2022 9.30 - 4.15 at

Centre for Theology and Ministry (29 College Cres. Parkville or online)

Please refer to the attached Flyer.

"Our Planet is Changing - Do We?"

At this convention we will particularly consider the issue of whether technological developments will enable us to continue with our current lifestyles without unsustainable harm being done to our planet. The alternative possibility is that we will need to significantly change our lifestyles. "

Also

"An excellent film has been / is being released Regenerating Australia - made by the team that made 2040.

Here's the link to the trailer of the film

<https://theregenerators.co/regenerating-australia/>

DEMOLITION OF THE HALLS - CHURCH SITE CURRENTLY CLOSED

The demolition is almost concluded. During this time the entire church site continues to be out-of-bounds. We anticipate that we will be able to use the church for Raie Lee's funeral later this week, although the buildings will not be fully functioning. Watch out for more news to come.

During the demolition phase the office has been relocated to Trinity Uniting Church, Black St Brighton. We are very grateful to the Trinity Church Council for their generosity and hospitality during this phase.

When the project is finished the only building to remain will be the church. (The Fraser St hall will remain but this will be on the parcel of land which has been sold) New, temporary toilets will be provided on site. The church office will be located in the Link after the demolition.

During the demolition period the church office number will continue to be the new number 0411 958 127.

ORMOND LEARNING HUB – READING LUKE'S PASSION – during Lent

By far the largest section of each of the four gospels is the account of Jesus' Passion. As the Cross is the prime symbol of the church, so the Passion is the prime story which shapes our understanding of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Yet, we only read the Passion on one day of the year, Good Friday, leaving little opportunity to explore our "biggest" story at any depth. The Passion is rich with symbolism, associations and religious connection back into Israel's story.

In this 3-week course we will delve into Luke's Passion, exploring the narrative movement leading up to it, the events of the crucifixion as Luke portrays them, the echoes of the Jewish story and what Luke is pointing to in his telling of the Passion.

When: Thursdays 17th, 24th & 31st March, 7.30pm.

Where: Face to face at Ormond Uniting Church – if the demolition is finished

Cost: \$30 for the course

Who: led by Rev. Andrew Boyle

Enquiries and booking to: learninghub@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

AN EXCELLENT DAILY REFLECTION BOOK

Ormond has been lucky to receive 3 additional copies (free) of With Love to the World this month. It covers the seasons of Lent and Easter.

This means there is an opportunity to "try before you buy". This resource covers about 3 months with a daily reading, reflection and prayer as well as stimulating questions to tackle at the end of each week. Normally the cost of a copy is \$6.00 and there are 4 copies during the year.

Let Heather know if you would like to try one of the 3 free copies and she'll post or deliver to you.

ROSTER for Sunday 6th March 2022

READING	Dianne Richter	
PRAYERS	Ron Townsend	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Lynne Parker	