

Order of Service 27/2/2022

Transfiguration Sunday

Opening verse on screen:

"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Luke 9:35

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Peter

Good morning, and please get take your seats as we begin to prepare for worship this Sunday. We know that mask mandates have since changed, but we would ask you to keep masks in place for the time being so that we can continue to care for the most vulnerable amongst us. Today as we worship we will reflect on the mystery of the transfiguration, the transformation of Jesus in the presence of his disciples.

So let us welcome the Word and light the Christ candle, as we prepare to worship this morning.

Song of praise: Christ be our light (ATOk313 verses 1, 2, 3 & 5)

- 1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*
 - 2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.*
 - 3. Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
Shared until all are fed.*
 - 5. Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.*
-

SONG: [Christ be our light](#), by Bernadette Farrell, from [All together okay](#), Openbook Publishers;
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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land
since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land
is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen,
we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.
**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation,
and care of the earth.**

Welcome and Introduction

Peter

Welcome to all of you joining us today, whether you are gathering together with us today or watching online. My name is Peter, Pastor of Olive way, and one third of the ministry team of Brunswick Uniting. Today our readings take us to the famous story of Jesus' transfiguration as we find it in Luke 9:28-36. This passage intentionally draws from our Hebrew Bible reading of Exodus 34:29-35, which we will hear alongside our Gospel reading. In transfiguration we are called to go up the mountain in which God speaks to us, but we descend transformed. How do your own encounters with God, whether in a mountain top experience or within the bustle of everyday life, transform you?

Prayers of Adoration and Confession including Word of Grace

Though we follow, stumbling and staggering,
we are grateful for the path you have set before us.
Lord Jesus. As we stand in your presence,
we feel the radiance of your light, exposing and illuminating
the dark and hidden places in our hearts.
Those parts we kid ourselves into thinking we can hide from you.
Let us allow that light to penetrate the hidden corners of our souls,
exposing what we leave hidden in the darkness and let that same light transform us.

Too often Lord, we settle for superficial transformation,
half-hearted efforts that yield nothing.
Too often we have earned the contempt from the world around
for seeking the transformation of society but failing to transform ourselves.
Forgive us where we have confused sanctimoniousness for holiness.
We have confused safety for protectionism.
We have confused greed with financial security.
We have sought relevance by aligning ourselves with power.
We, your church, have neglected our duties.
We ask for your forgiveness.
But we also ask that you would transform us,
to be transfigured into your likeness.
We thank you God, that we have been shown mercy and grace through Christ.
We have been shown grace upon grace,
and that it is because of Christ, through Christ, and in Christ, our sin is forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

With the Children

Peter, Ian

Ian: Hey Peter, this is the first time you've been up here this year. How were your holidays?
Peter: Pretty good, we managed to get to Queensland to see my family. What about you, what did you do for your holidays? I know you like to take your camera, did you get any good snaps?
Ian: ...

Photo slide of mountain top

Peter: I'm detecting a bit of theme here Ian, you really seem to like going to the mountains. What is it about the mountains that you like?

Song – This little light of mine

1. *This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*
 2. *Won't let anyone blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine...*
 3. *Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine...*
 4. *All around the world, I'm gonna let it shine...*
-

SONG: [This little light of mine](#), PUBLIC DOMAIN

Commissioning – Ruth Sandy

Introduction

Ruth comes forward with representatives of Olive Way during song

Peter: Since about midway through last year (following our tri-annual review) we have been seeking a new direction for one of the main ministries of Brunswick Uniting Church, that being Olive Way. This new direction seeks to build upon the existing strengths, whilst honouring the work done over years, but also enables Olive Way to grow and develop and deepen our roots. We realised that for this to happen we really needed a lot more help, and someone who could actively support the pastor of Olive Way. After a long search, and perhaps some divine intervention, we managed to find Ruth Sandy who we believe will help us to meet the needs of Olive Way. So, I'm really grateful that Ruth and her girls are with us today, and we want acknowledge Ruth as she steps into this new venture and to pray for her as she commences her role.

Ruth makes a brief response.

Symbols of Ruth's ministry presented?

Ian: We come with joy to commission Ruth in the role of Olive Way Operations Coordinator. As we prepare to do so, let's affirm the ministry that we all share:

There are diverse gifts:

But it is the same Spirit who gives them

There are different ways of serving God:

But it is the same One who is served.

Each of us is given gifts of ministry by the Spirit:

And there is no gift without its corresponding service.

There is one ministry of Christ:

And in this ministry we all share.

Together we are the body of Christ:

And individually members of it.

The Questions

Ian: Ruth, we are very happy and thank God for calling you to minister with us here. We ask you these questions as a sign of the faith that informs your work here.

Ruth, do you know Jesus Christ as wisdom word, healing love, and reigning hope?

I do.

Do you believe that you are called by God through the Church to this ministry?

I do.

Relying on God's grace, and with the support of this congregation will you faithfully carry out the responsibilities of your role in the Brunswick Uniting Church?

With God's help & love, I will.

(to Ruth and Peter) Ruth and Peter, you have been called by God to minister together in Olive Way. Will you promise, in faith and obedience to Christ, to share this ministry, supporting one another in love, and inspiring God's people here in their common ministry for Christ?

With God's help & love, we will.

(To the congregation) Will you accept Ruth as a member of our staff here at Brunswick Uniting Church; will you encourage her in love and support her in her ministry, serving Jesus Christ with her?

With God's help & love, we will.

(To all present) May God give you strength to fulfil these promises; and the grace to minister together as Christ's people in this place.

Act of Commissioning

Representatives of the Olive Way surround Ruth and the whole congregation reaches out a hand in blessing.

Ian: Let us pray in silence for Ruth ...

By the Holy Spirit, O God,
give strength to your servant Ruth
and set her heart on fire with love for you.
Increase in her your gifts of grace:
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and wonder in your presence,
the spirit of joy and delight in your service,
now and for ever.

Amen.

Blessing Song: *May God's sheltering wings* MV214

*May God's sheltering wings,
her gathering wings protect you.
May God's nurturing arms,
her cradling arms sustain you.
And hold you in her love,
And hold you in her love.*

SONG: [May God's sheltering wings](#), by Judith Snowdon, from [More Voices](#),
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Bible Readings

Kirsty, Clare, Peter

Kirsty (Exodus 34:29): 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.

Clare (Luke 9:28-31): 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, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Kirsty (Exodus 34:30-31): 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.

Clare (Luke 9:32-36): 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.

Kirsty (Exodus 34:32-35): Afterward all the Israelites came near, and Moses 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.

Peter (2 Corinthians 3:12-13; 17-18; 4:6): 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.

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.

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

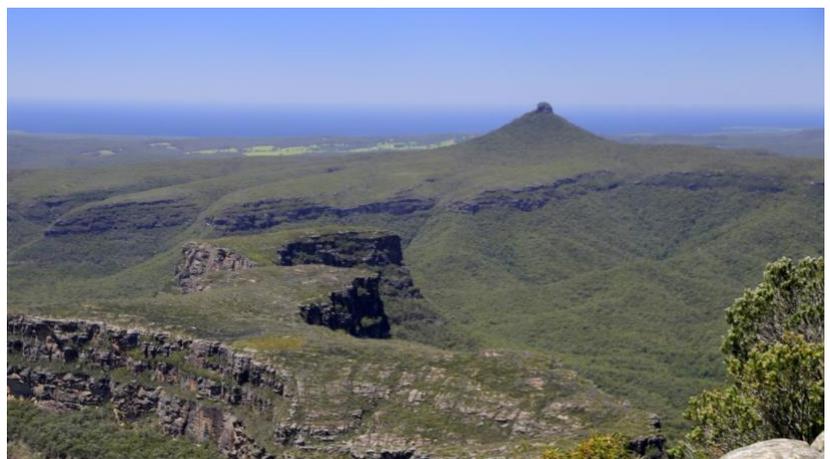
For these words of witness and for Christ the Word:

Thanks be to God

Reflection

Ian

One day, back when I was a teenager, my family went on a bushwalk to climb Pigeon House Mountain in the Budawang range on the south coast of NSW. Pigeon House – yes, it's a stupid name for an awesome place. Here's a picture – it was named by James Cook when he was sailing past in 1770. He wrote in his journal: *a remarkable peaked hill laying inland the top of which look'd like a Pigeon House and occasioned my giving it that name* – thanks for that Jim. But of course, it already had a name: the Yuin people called it Didthul which means mother's breast. And isn't that just colonialism in a



nutshell? What do you see today? – a pigeon coup, a cage for birds, or a breast, a source of lifegiving nourishment from the earth?

So, my family set out to climb Didthul on a hot sunny day in January – it was very humid, but the skies were clear. As you might imagine, it's a strenuous walk up that long incline which ends in a steep rock scramble and ascent up ladders to the summit where the views are awesome. But that day, when we got to the summit, the first thing we saw was a change in the weather coming – thick dark clouds were rolling in fast. Then we heard the thunder and saw the lightning and before we could get to the ladders and climb down, it was upon us. The clouds enveloped the mountaintop and suddenly we were literally in the middle of a thunderstorm. The lightning flashed and crashed around us, thick heavy rain drenched us, the rocks and metal ladders became slick and slippery as we desperately sought to get down and find shelter. We were terrified. Very much like Peter, John and James on the mountain-top of transfiguration today. *While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud* – a cloud which represents the presence of God.

Fear goes with the biblical experience of mountaintops – it was there in both our readings from the Gospel and from Exodus – and today I want to ask why.

In Exodus Moses comes down from the mountain after speaking with God, and *when Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining* (which is obviously where Xnty gets the idea of the transfiguration), and *the people were afraid to come near him*. So Moses puts on a veil to protect them.

Earlier when the Israelites first come to Mt Sinai, we read this: Ex 19:16-19 *On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled*. Take it from someone who has been on a mountain in a thunderstorm, that is one very scary scenario. But it gets worse. *Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because GOD had descended upon it in fire; ...and the whole mountain shook violently*. The people of Tonga can tell us from their recent experience about fire and smoke and shaking mountains – terrifying indeed. But why should this terror accompany meeting God?

In scripture mountains are frequently places of encounter with God, places of epiphany, divine revelation, places of transcendence, where we are taken out of this world, beyond the normal limits of human experience, right into the divine presence. Why is that terrifying? Is that not what we seek? – to know God, to be close to God, and to have that encounter shape our living? Why should we be afraid of God, especially if God is love? Have you ever felt anything like spiritual fear?

Yes, mountains can be dangerous places. There's a Wikipedia page that I don't recommend entitled "List of People who Died Climbing Mt Everest." The list has 309 entries dating from 1922 the majority of whom are Nepalese Sherpas. Roughly 1 in 7 people who attempt the climb die. But people keep coming, because although mountains are dangerous, they are also awesome places that draw us to them. The Australian High Country is not in the same league as the Himalayas, but I can't stay away despite my teenage brush with death on Didthul. Being up there expands my heart and I long for that experience. What about you? What do you know of the relationship between awe and fear in the life of faith?

The fear of GOD is the beginning of wisdom, writes King Solomon – awe in the presence of GOD, like being on a mountain top. There are different theological takes on "the fear of GOD" in scripture, on its purpose and meaning, but the one that really engages me is introduced to us 'in the beginning'.

Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit, and what happens? *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked*. Previously, they were blissfully innocent and unashamed. Now they see themselves differently. They have gone where only God can go,

eaten what only God can eat, and now they see as God sees. They see themselves exposed. And here comes God walking in the garden, like Jesus on Easter morning. Adam and Eve hear GOD walking in the garden, *and they hid themselves from the presence of GOD among the trees of the garden. But GOD called to them, and said, "Where are you?" the man said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."*

You see, entering into the presence of God does more than reveal God-self to us, it reveals us to ourselves – metaphorically naked, with all our vulnerability exposed. And that can be a very disturbing.

Who's ever seen a counsellor, those purveyors of the "talking cure"? Most of us at one time or another, I suspect. How does just talking to someone help us in our difficulties, our times of trial? Once a counsellor that I know was speaking to their client and the client was taking offence at the counsellor, the client snapped at them, "Why are you saying these things to me? Why are you upsetting me like this?!" The counsellor replied, "I'm just reflecting back to you what I am hearing from you, that's my job." The client said, "It's like you're holding up a mirror to me and I don't like what I see." It can be hard to see ourselves as we really are. Especially to look at our hurt or pain, to see those parts of ourselves that bring shame, to be confronted by the seemingly unscalable heights of healing and change. It can be daunting, it can be paralysing, it can be terrifying. AND it can be liberating and empowering and transformative.

Do you know that fear? Do you know that release?

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes about Moses' veiling and unveiling. Remember, Moses put on a veil because the Israelites were terrified of the radiance of God's glory shining in his face. He put it on to protect them from the self-revealing light that lays bare the depths of our humanity. Paul writes, *And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of GOD as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image.* In other words, while God is a bit more than a metaphysical psycho-therapist, God wants to help us change our lives, change the world, by holding up a mirror to us, the mirror of God's own being. It is awesome and frightening to be close to the divine presence because that presence, the light of love, reveals who we really are in our vulnerability, and calls us to transformation. More than that, God calls us to reflect that love ourselves, to take on the image of God, to become like a shard of that shining mirror in the world. And being the image of God here means reflecting the love that radiates from Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration – vulnerable, self-giving, violence-refusing love, healing, peace-making, justice-working love, creation renewing love.

But transformation is hard, isn't it? – in ourselves and in the world. It means confronting human brokenness, our shame, our sense of unworthiness or incapacity. But it also means allowing the love within us to expand our hearts and to spill out into the world.

Scary stuff. Which is why, I think, faith can sometimes become an escape from the very challenges it exposes us to. Faith can be distorted into a way of limiting, controlling, and avoiding fear, a way of blocking out the transformational mirror of God's radiance. We've all encountered, perhaps even felt the attraction of, that hard, literal, rule-based faith that is like a cage built to hold and restrict the free flying spirit of love – Pigeon House faith that contains the spirit which longs to transform the world with peace – and hasn't she got her work cut out for her today?

Do we see the mountain of faith as a cage? Something to contain our fears? Are we tempted to try and



close the spirit in? Or do we see the mountain of faith as the life nurturing source of divine sustenance, Didthul?

My family all made it down from Didthul that day. We had to help each other, support each other, even carry each other at times. But we got out safely. We weren't safe while we were there. We were right on the edge of life – an awesome and terrifying place to be. Like Moses on Sinai, like Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration – the mountain is an awesome, dangerous, frightening place, but it is the very place to which Christ leads us, there to grow and be transformed as children of the divine mother for the sake of all creation.



Reflective Music

Jesus, Your Light – Jesus le Christ (Taize AOV2-5)

Offering Introduction

Peter

Bank account details on screen

Let's respond to the gospel by making an offering of faith.

There are many ways that we can do this:

You might actively commit to love God by loving your neighbour as yourself.

You might dedicate time and money to support the work of church in loving creation and caring for the poor.

You might look for ways you can volunteer in our programs.

You might put cash in the offering bowls by the font.

You might set up a regular electronic transfer.

You might get your phone out right now and make an offering into the account on the screen. Whatever you do as we sing together now, do it with a heart open to love.

What do you have to offer God in faith?

Offering Song Jesus, Your Light – Jesus le Christ (Taize AOV2-5)

*Jesus your light is shining within us.
Let not my doubts and my darkness speak to me.
Jesus your light is shining within us.
Let my heart always welcome your love.*

*Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure,
Ne laisse pas mes ténèbres me parler.
Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure,
Donne-moi d'accueillir ton amour.*

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Offering Dedication

Peter

We thank you God for the gifts of your people, the work of our hands, the gifts that have been given. Today we offer a portion of that back to you, for the work of this church, and the care of the poor. May they be used in your service. Amen

Prayers of the People

Jim

Jesus Christ, mountain-climber

We pray for the World:

We pray for renewed hope in a new year. May we all find peace.

We pray that this war in Ukraine ends soon.

We pray that the ordinary people of Ukraine can find strength.

May we all see hope on the horizon.

Leader: In your mercy, hear our prayers

Response: **We feel our feet on the ground.**

We visualize a mountain and a new horizon.

We pray for the Church:

May the Uniting Church help those left behind by the pandemic and shut-downs.

May the church help congregations opening to in-person services.

May the church help us to lead, and serve.

Leader: In your mercy, hear our prayers

Response: **We feel our feet on the ground.**

We visualize a mountain and a new horizon.

We pray for those in need:

May those who are depressed or tired find support. May carers find rest.

May we feel inspired when we see mountains.

May those oppressed by legislation to ostracise them, feel loved and respected.

May those watching at home, feel included.

May we all feel able to be creative and free, again.

Leader: In your mercy, hear our prayers

Response: **We feel our feet on the ground.**

We visualize a mountain and a new horizon.

In the name of Christ, traveller, teacher, explorer.

Praise

Amen

Notices

Peter

Sending Song: Open your eyes (vs 1,2,5)

*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."*

- 1. 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.*

2. *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.*

5. *See yourself in the living and the dying
see yourself in the sorrow and the shame.
Can we feel it deep inside,
every hurt and every cry
from the deaf and blind, the sick, the lame?*

SONG: [Open your eyes see yourself in the one who's shining on the hill](#), Robin Mann © 1994, 2004; from All Together for Good, © 2001 Willow Publishing Pty Ltd, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Blessing and Sending

Ian

Go now to shine with peace, love, hope and joy in your living.

And may God the Source of the light
shine in your hearts,
may Jesus Christ the bearer of the light
illumine your way,
and may the Holy Spirit
give you eyes to see by the light.

Thank yous

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to...

Liturgist:
Peter Blair
(Olive Way Pastor)

Prayers of the People:
Jim Kilpatrick

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Musicians: James Balsillie,
Alistair Hunter, Courtney
Rohde, Shawn Whelan

Bible readers:
Kirsty Brown
Clare Keogh
Peter Blair

Musicians:
Elaine Potter
(co-ordinator)
Jane Allardice
Helen Burnham
Michael Cameron
Catherine Leslie
Bronte Potter

Images:
Ian Ferguson

Children's time:
Peter Blair
Ian Ferguson

Editing / Production:
Martin Brown
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Mal Rowe

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Postlude Song: We are
marching in the light of
God, South African, from
Together in Song, Harper
Collins *Religious*,

Closing verse on screen:

"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Luke 9:35