

## Transfiguration Sunday – Year C

**Sunday 2 March 2025**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Lindsey Sanderson, Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland, The United Reformed Church, for her thoughts on Transfiguration Sunday.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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## Introduction

This is Transfiguration Sunday. In the liturgical calendar it is the climax of the Season of Epiphany, which runs from Christmas to Lent. The word Epiphany means ‘manifestation’ or ‘appearance’ and throughout this season the Revised Common Lectionary offers us stories of Jesus that reveal who He is and how He is made manifest to the world. This comes to a dramatic climax in the account of the Transfiguration, which is included in Matthew, Mark and Luke’s gospels. The Transfiguration is an intimate yet instructive moment in Jesus’ life, during which Jesus is confirmed as God’s Son. The account of the Transfiguration is read the Sunday before Lent. This allows us to prepare for our journey with Him towards Jerusalem.

The Statement Concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church includes these words: “The highest authority for what we believe and do is God’s Word in the Bible alive for *his* (God’s) people today through the help of the Spirit. We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God’s people through the years.” ([The-Basis-of-the-Union.pdf](#)) For me, getting to grips with Scripture is core to my faith and my leading of worship. Scripture is a living document, read and understood, internalised and lived out in light of the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Understanding its context and significance for its time and reflecting on what that might be saying to us today is central to my approach to reading and preaching. The Sunday service is often the only time people have opportunities to engage with the Bible, to hear it being read and to think about what it means, so reflecting on God’s Word, usually through a sermon, is a significant part of worship for me and one which I enjoy. As one who preaches, and in my current role as an itinerant preacher rather than someone who journeys with a particular congregation over a period of time, I see part of my role as one who seeks to enable the Bible to come alive for people.

In terms of my preparation I begin with the lectionary passages, looking to understand them and think about what they might mean for discipleship today. I find great joy in singing so I am then likely to choose hymns or songs, mindful of what I once heard when I was an ordinand: ‘we remember far more theology from the hymns we sing than the sermons we hear preached’ and the prayers and introduction to the theme/all age time will come towards the end of the preparation time. I am quite traditional in my approach to worship but depending on the context would also think of whether it would be helpful to have any forms of symbolic action or response from the congregation as part of the service. Looking at the readings again for Transfiguration Sunday in 2025 the theme that has emerged for me is that of God’s presence in our lives, in the life of the Church and in the world.

## Exodus 34:29-35

This passage concludes a section of Exodus which begins in Chapter 19 when, after their 40-year journey from enslavement in Egypt, the ancient Hebrews finally arrive at the Promised Land. At Mount Sinai, God makes a covenant with Israel and gives instructions, including the Ten Commandments, for life in the new community. These instructions teach the Israelites how to respect each other, each other's property, and the land (Exodus 20-31). Almost immediately, while Moses is on the mountaintop communing with God, the covenant is threatened by the Golden Calf incident (Exodus 32). Eventually an uneasy peace prevails after Moses intercedes on behalf of the people. The people of God continue their journey to the Promised Land, but God does not travel with them (Exodus 33). Again Moses intercedes, asking for a glimpse of God's glory. Moses is given a glimpse of God's back as he cannot see God's face and live. God declares Godself to be merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, faithfulness and justice. (Exodus 34:6-7). The tablets are replaced, the covenant is renewed, and feasts are established to mark the relationship.

When Moses' face shines at the end of this story, it affirms the renewal of the covenant. The shining face is an indicator of Moses's relationship to God, of his openness and vulnerability before God and before the community. It is a sign that Moses trusts God and that the people can trust God and trust Moses to lead them.

Some wonderings...

- Why are the people frightened by Moses' shining face? We might describe someone as looking radiant, but we don't usually find them fearful.
- Moses veiled his face when speaking with the people and removed his veil when speaking with God. This seems to be the opposite of what we might expect. Why might this be?
- Moses was physically changed through his encounter with God. In what ways are we changed through encountering God?

## Psalm 99

The psalm is entitled 'Praise to God for His Holiness' and it opens with a traditional response to holiness, trembling and fear in the presence of God who is "great and awesome", but unlike traditional images of holiness that emphasise God's otherness. The psalm continues to offer praise to God for God's commitment to a particular people, in a particular place and their situation. God is far from remote, but exists in relationship with people and God's nature is characterised by justice, equity and righteousness. A very

different experience of kingship from that of the dominant cultures of the Ancient Near East. God's relationship with Moses, Aaron and Samuel is singled out. They are described as those who called out to God and whom God answered. Moses, Aaron and Samuel kept God's decrees and laws and God was forgiving towards them. The psalm concludes with an encouragement to offer praise and worship to God, for God is holy.

Some wonderings...

- What does it mean to say that God is holy? Do we miss something of who God is by moving away from a response of fear and trembling?
- The psalm talks about Moses, Aaron and Samuel's relationship with God in terms of keeping decrees and laws. What are the key features of our relationship with God?

## [2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2](#)

Immediately prior to the lectionary passage Paul has been talking about ministry which flows out of the "the ministry of the Spirit" and is a "ministry of justification" or alignment with the ways of God (2 Cor 3:8-9). Whether we are aware of this or not, when our actions align with the leading of the Spirit and the ways of God, God's glory becomes visible; the ways of God become embodied in us and what we do. (2 Cor 3:10-11) This, Paul says, is the reason to act with hope and boldness.

We need to be careful in reading this text that we do not interpret it as indicating that Christianity is better than Judaism. In Paul's time there was not a defined distinction between Christianity and Judaism, rather some believers embodied traditional Jewish practices as part of their discipleship and others, including Paul, saw themselves as being made free to move in new directions with new practices according to the Spirit. Frank L. Crouch suggests that it is possible to translate verse 13 as "all of us who follow Christ and who have actually had the veil removed see the glory of the Lord and are being transformed — unlike those followers of Christ who still look from behind a veil."

For Paul, Christ's removal of the veil cannot help but be a transformative experience. Seeing the glory of the Lord changes everything. God's glory is exposed, as is the depths of God's mercy. God's grace is changing Paul, and is also changing the Corinthians "from glory unto glory". The Corinthians may not be the perfect image of God's glory, but Paul knows that God has not abandoned them. God's Spirit is at work within him and within the Corinthian church and all its struggles.

Some wonderings...

- If the Corinthian church is transformed through God's mercy and grace, in what ways are our church communities transformed through God's mercy and grace?

### [Luke 9:28-36, \(37-43a\)](#)

The transfiguration of Jesus is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospel and there is a temptation to meld the different accounts into one. Luke sets his account immediately after the scene where Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah (Luke 9:20). The transfiguration offers a confirmation of Peter's confession and a foretaste of the glory that will be experienced when God's kingdom is fully present.

Luke's emphasis is on Jesus' identity. His physical appearance is transformed, reminiscent of Moses' shining face but Jesus' clothes are transformed as well-becoming: "dazzling white," words Luke uses elsewhere to describe angelic figures. (Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10). Luke is telling us that Jesus' transfiguration is not simply because He is experiencing God's glory but because He is the source of divine glory.

The presence of Moses and Elijah also contribute to the emphasis on Jesus' identity, representing the Law and Prophets. The risen Jesus Himself will assert that Moses and the prophets point toward Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46). Luke tells us in our scene that Moses and Elijah "were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (v31), in anticipation of Jesus' teaching that He is the ultimate fulfilment of scripture.

The most dramatic confirmation of Jesus' identity comes with the voice of God. Whilst there are links back to the words spoken at Jesus' baptism there are notable differences: at the baptism words are directed to Jesus, "You are my Son", "the beloved", whereas here the message is for the disciples, "This is my son", "my chosen." The disciples are told to "listen to him" – a costly command when we remember what Jesus has been saying about His death and the challenge of discipleship just prior to Transfiguration. Finally at Jesus' baptism the voice comes from heaven, whereas here it comes from the cloud, suggesting that God is very near.

Another unique element of Luke's story is that the Transfiguration occurs in the context of prayer. It is one of a number of examples in which for Jesus prayer involved a dramatic encounter with God, it was an experience of God rather than simply speaking to God. This prayer experience is not limited to Jesus but is also shared by others as Luke recounts the good news through his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

Some wonderings....

- This dramatic moment of encounter with God happens on a mountain top. Where are the places we encounter God?
- What are our expectations when we turn to God in prayer? In what ways do we experience God through prayer?
- How do our encounters with God enable us to 'take up our cross' and follow Christ?

## Sermon ideas

Transfiguration Sunday is one of those times in the year when the links between the lectionary readings are obvious and there is a wealth of material on offer. At the same time, because it is an event that we have the opportunity to mark in worship every year, we can struggle to know what to say that we haven't said before.

One theme that I find throughout the readings is the idea of God's presence, which might be developed in the following ways:

- The stories from Exodus and Luke are located on a mountain top. This will resonate with many people as a location where they have encountered God. Why are mountains significant places for meeting God?
- Moses, Jesus and the disciples cannot remain on the mountain and have to return to their communities – do we also find God when we have returned from the mountains?
- For the Psalmist, being in God's presence is terrifying as we experience God's holiness. But God wants to be in relationship with us and is a God of justice, righteousness and equity and so, like Moses, we discover that God is merciful and slow to anger.
- Being in God's presence involves transformation for individuals and communities because of God's mercy and grace. What are the signs of transformation we display, and like the community at Corinth, how do we proclaim that transformation with hope and boldness?
- The disciples declare, "it is good for us to be here." How can we celebrate God's presence with us in our churches today?



- Paul uses the imagery of the veil being removed as a metaphor for our fuller relationship with God through Christ. Do we sometimes feel more comfortable behind our veils, as individuals and communities? Do we welcome the opportunity of “being transformed into the same image [of the Lord] from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18)? How do we live more fully into God’s presence as part of our calling and commitment to costly discipleship?

## Prayers

### Call to worship /Gathering prayer

Holy, yes holy is our God.

We gather in God’s presence to bring our worship and praise  
for God is merciful and slow to anger.  
God loves justice and righteousness.

God is with us in this moment and in each moment,  
so, may we take these moments to listen, to worship, to be present,  
to be transformed by God’s grace and the power of God’s spirit.

Holy, yes holy is our God so let us worship together.

Holy God, You come amongst us.  
You are present here and we worship You.  
You are present in the beauty of the world in which we live in all its intricacy and diversity.  
You are present in the relationships we have with family, friends and neighbours,  
in the laughter and tears we share together.  
You are present when justice prevails and mercy is shown,  
when we dare to hope of a world which mirrors Your *shalom*.

Holy God, You come amongst us.  
Your promise is that You will never leave us.  
We trust in Your promise and Your presence with us as we worship,  
and so, we bring our thanks and praise. Amen.

### Confession / Repentance

Holy God,



You come amongst us and yet we know that there are occasions when we place limits on our receptiveness to Your presence.

We limit the time when we consciously come into Your presence as we are busy with other activities, worries or concerns.

We restrict the opportunities we take to listen for Your voice, hear Your Word, experience Your presence with us and live in Your love.

We fail to remember that in reaching out to friend or stranger  
we are showing our love for You,  
who loves us without condition and with a magnitude beyond our comprehension.

We recognise the ways in which we place limits and boundaries on our discipleship and we ask for Your forgiveness.

Free us through Your grace and mercy

to live as people who are being transformed into Your image from one degree of glory to another through the power of Your Spirit.

Let us hear and take to heart these words of promise:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!”

Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Thanksgiving / Gratitude**

Holy God,

when Moses met You on the mountain his face shone,  
reflecting Your glory and power.

From that day on he was never the same.

He had encountered You and his face shone.

**Loving Spirit, You make our faces shine. Help us to light up the faces of others.**

Today You meet us on mountains and motorways,

in the home and at work,

in places of great joy or despair.

We too have been changed by our encounter and our lives will never be the same.

**Loving Spirit, You make our faces shine. Help us to light up the faces of others.**

Holy God,  
when Moses returned from the mountain he wore a veil as the people were frightened of his shining face.  
Moses revealed You to his community  
and from that day on they were never the same.

**Loving Spirit, You make our faces shine. Help us to light up the faces of others.**

Today each one of us reveals who You are in our words and actions,  
in our prayers and attitudes,  
in our loving and hopefulness and expectation of what is to come.  
May our communities recognise You and never be the same.

**Loving Spirit, You make our faces shine. Help us to light up the faces of others.**

### **Prayer for others / Intercession**

Holy God, Three-in-One, perfect community of love,  
we bring our prayers for the world and her people,  
not because we think You are absent from people and places for whom we have concern,  
but that by giving voice to them we may be reminded of Your love for each person and the earth itself,  
and we may be encouraged in our commitment to live as citizens of Your kingdom  
and work for its flourishing in our midst.

And so, we pray for all who are seeking a place of welcome and safety this day.

For those who are willing to risk everything, even their lives, to cross seas in small boats,  
paying extortionate fees to people traffickers as they search for a better life.

For those who are fleeing their country because of violence meted out against them  
because of their religion, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or political viewpoint  
which means they are no longer safe and are in danger of imprisonment or even death.

For those who feel trapped in their homes, due to the intimidation, bullying or violence of another,  
and find that home is a place of fear and not safety.

May they experience Your presence  
and may we be welcoming people and communities of safety.

We pray for all who are seeking peace this day.

For those who are caught in the terror of war  
in Ukraine,  
and in Russia.  
In Gaza,  
the West Bank  
and in Israel.  
In Myanmar,  
Sudan,  
and Yemen.

Wherever there is conflict.

For those who are caught in the humanitarian crises that accompany or are the aftermath  
of conflict,  
those who face starvation,  
those who had had to flee as refugees, separated from families for many months now,  
those who have no home to return to.

For those who continue to work for reconciliation and justice, continuing to find ways of  
bringing communities and nations together,  
who provide humanitarian aid and support to help people articulate the trauma they have  
experienced,  
who offer opportunities for swords to be turned into ploughshares.

May they experience Your presence  
and may we be peace-filled people and communities of justice.

We pray for all who need to feel the gentle touch of your compassion this day.

For those are worn down by illness or infirmity, anxiety, or with caring for a loved one.

For those who are struggling with the pressures of the cost of living crisis,  
the demands of work, school or family life.

For those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

May they experience Your presence

and may we be people of compassion and communities of hope.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **Blessing / Closing prayer**

Holy, yes holy is our God, who is with us as we worship.

Holy, yes holy is our God who is with us as we now leave this place.

Holy, yes holy is our God who we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit/Creator, Reconciler and Sanctifier and who blesses us this and every day. Amen.

## **World Day of Prayer – Friday 7 March 2025**

### **Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action**

World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women with a focus on prayer and action for peace and justice. Its roots lie in the support of God's Mission in the world, with a strong sense of identification with the needs of women and children.

A global wave of prayer begins at dawn on the international date line in Samoa and sweeps across the Pacific, passing through more than 170 countries, before finishing at sunset in American Samoa some 39 hours later, encircling the world in prayer.

Each year a service is written by an ecumenical group of women from the host country (with countries taking turns to host by rotation) who share a concern for women and children, a vision of Christian unity and an insight into God's mission. The service shares these concerns globally in the context of the writing country, making each WDP service a focus for *informed prayer and prayerful action*.

### **'I Made You Wonderful'**

This is the theme of the service for 2025, written by women in the Cook Islands, which invites us into the knowledge that each one of us was made with care and love by God.

## Prayers for World Day of Prayer

### Welcome and blessing

*'Kia orana' is a phrase of greeting in the Cook Islands Maori language, meaning 'May you live long and may you live well'.*

Kia orana

May you live long and may you live well.

May you shine like the sun.

May you dance with the waves.

Kia orana!

**Kia orana!**

May you live long!

**May you live long!**

May you live well!

**May you live well!**

May you shine like the sun!

**May you shine like the sun!**

May you dance with the waves!

**May you dance with the waves!**

### Prayers of Intercession

God of Wisdom, we pray for the leaders in our world.

Guide their hearts and minds to have integrity as they make decisions.

Inspire them, and bless them with vision to move our world towards unity and peace.

We pray for women and girls who are vulnerable in our societies.

Create the conditions so that elderly women can live with respect and dignity.

Give our young women the education, aspiration and vision to develop into a promising future.

Provide strength, courage and patience to all women experiencing domestic violence.

God of Healing, restore us to wellness.

Heal us from physical diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Relieve us from mental illness and heal our emotional wounds.

Protect us from the selfishness and greed that threaten our spiritual wellbeing.

God, help our World Day of Prayer movement unite our communities in prayer.

Help us make your love visible.

Strengthen us to continue loving and supporting all who are in need.  
Lead us to treat others as wonderfully made by you,  
so that all people would feel that they are important, cared for, and treasured.  
Amen

Visit the [World Day of Prayer \(Scottish Committee\) website](#) for the worship resources from the Cook Islands, find a service taking place near you, and further information about the World Day of Prayer.

## Musical suggestions

*God Welcomes All* (GWA) is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music and words-only versions are now available; and digital resources, including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from <https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

- GWA 48 – “Let our praise be your welcome” – links to the Corinthians passage
- GWA 85 - “May the Lord bless you” – asking that God’s face may shine on us
- GWA 87 – “The Lord bless you and keep you” – another blessing that reflects on God’s blessings on us throughout all generations
- GWA 205 – “Sing to God from every city” – a call for us all to join together in praising God

Picking up on the theme of Holiness/God’s presence with us:

- CH4 111 – “Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!”

- CH4 189 – “Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here”
- CH4 530 – “One more step along the world I go”
- CH4 609 – “Come, living God, when least expected”
- CH4 755 – “Be still and know that I am God”

Relating to the Bible passages

- CH4 353 – “Bright the cloud and bright the glory” (Gospel)
- CH4 519 – “Love divine, all loves excelling” (Epistle)
- CH4 601 – “Look upon us, blessed Lord” (Epistle)
- “How good, Lord to be here” (J. Armitage Robinson)  
[https://hymnary.org/text/tis\\_good\\_lord\\_to\\_be\\_here](https://hymnary.org/text/tis_good_lord_to_be_here)
- A suggested [playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Epiphany](#) can be found on the Church of Scotland website.

## Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.
- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.



- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?  
Did it function well as a whole?  
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

*God Welcomes All* can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

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