

**St Stephens Williamstown
Uniting Church in Australia**



**Service of the Word
Transfiguration Sunday**
(During 5-day Victoria's Lockdown)
14th February 2021 – 9:30AM

God's People Gather

Congregational responses are printed in Bold type

Introit: TIS 746 The heavens shall declare...

Lighting of the Christ Candle *Iris Whitehurst*

Call to Worship *Iris Whitehurst*

We are present in this place and where we are right now,
expecting God to meet us,
to remind us God's enduring presence is with us and within us.
Christ is in you!
Be assured in faith for God journeys with us.
Praise be to the Holy Creator.
Come, let us worship God!
(please be seated)

Greetings / Welcome *Rev S. Juliette Maua'i*

The grace of the Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Welcome to you all this Sunday where our State of Victoria is in a 5-day
lockdown since yesterday until next Wednesday midnight.
Let us lay aside the things of this world, focused on God!

Acknowledgement to Country

I acknowledge the Sovereign First Peoples, of the Kulin Nation, the
Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways where we gather on this
day. Let us pay respect to their Elders: past, present and emerging. They
have cared for this ancient land since creation as the Creator ordained it.
Let us walk gently upon this land, listening to her stories told through
creation and her First Nations Peoples. *Dadirri*, listen deeply, to the Spirit
and let us commit ourselves to walking together for justice for First
Nations Peoples.

Opening Prayer

Adapted from Psalm 50:1-6

Holy Creator,
God of fire and rain, you call us to you.
From the rising of the sun to the setting of your light,
may we feel the soil beneath our feet as it nurtures and rises,
may you pull on our heartstrings,
that our chests heave at the sound of your voice.
And the heavens proclaim your justice, O God! Amen.

Song: TIS 165 Praise our God, the great Creator...

Prayer of Confession: *(we pray together)*

Holy Creator God,
we confess that we make false gods of this world.
We are eager to find hope in where we put our progress.
We are quick to find our faith in systems that ensure our entitlement.
We are tempted to find your sovereignty in situations we wish to control
ourselves.
Help us to proclaim the light of the gospel and the glory of Christ.
May Christ's light shine in our hearts and into the world. Amen.

Words of Affirmation

God's light shines in your hearts and through you, friends.
In the face of Jesus, God's glory and grace are revealed to you.

Thanks be to God!

(Remain seated)

Song: TIS 747 The Lord is my light, my light and salvation...

Time with our Young People <https://youtu.be/sT-S1F3qsVI>

(Children remain in Worship)

Listen for God's Word

Heather Russell

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet. **A light to our path.**

2 Kings 2:1-12 – *Elijah Ascends to Heaven*

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. ³The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

⁴Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. ⁵The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

⁶Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. ⁷Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." ¹⁰He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." ¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The

chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Mark 9:2-9 – *The Transfiguration*

²Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Lord, may we meditate on these words of scripture and come to a deeper understanding of their meaning for our time.

Reflection: *Rev S. Juliette Maua'i*

Pray: Transforming God, we hear your divine voice and hope for new and deeper understanding of the ministries to which you call each of your disciples. As we follow in the footprints of prophets and disciples before us, may we experience what it truly means to be disciples of Christ, living in your mystery and in the reality of our world. Amen.

God's presence/voice through the clouds...moving us into his ministry:

How appropriate that today we celebrate the transfiguration of our Christ and Saviour as we are propelled into a five-day covid lockdown in the State of Victoria. This time, experts inform our State government that the coronavirus is of a different strain, moving faster in the air, spreading with close contact.

The need to readjust (again) to Stage 4 lockdown for the third time means: no Sunday worship today and the start of Lent with Ash Wednesday will be marked in our homes. Well, we can throw our hands up and complain as the Israelites did. But I encourage you to not react. Accept and move forward. Focus on the things that come from above,

away from this world, however distracting and tiresome, and bloody hard life can be. Look for God's presence. Listen for God's voice coming through the clouds.

We came through Advent season preparing for God's in-breaking. We celebrated God's coming in the birth of a child born in humble beginnings. The Season after the Epiphany ends. God is breaking through strongly with a fullness of such radiant light, a menacing force with power over water, wind, and fire.

One commentary says, "The transfiguration lifts the veil between one reality and another, plunging us into the world of mystery." (*Feasting on the Gospels, Mark, Year B*) and, noting that the beginning of today's Gospel commences with, "[a]fter six days" from Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27), there is a sense that we need to be paying attention!

In 2 Kings 2:1-12, Elisha struggles to let go of his father, Elijah, on their travels from Gilgal (v.1), down to Bethel (v.2), to Jericho (v.4), until they reached the river Jordan and crossed through it (vv.7-8). In their travels it was the community that lends advice and walks alongside them until only Elijah and Elisha crossed to the other side of the Jordan, where fire separated them and the gushing whirlwind of God took Elijah up into heaven, leaving Elisha (vv.11-12).

Their journey is reminiscent of times we are separated and where we have farewelled our beloved saints in our community. How did you feel last Sunday when we remembered loved ones called into God's presence to rest? Were you moved to recall relationships and memories, or conversations and disagreements along life's journey, and the sadness and joys!

Elisha's desperate calling out to his father, the physical tearing of his own clothes in two pieces as Elijah ascended above, then away in the clouds until Elisha could no longer glimpse Elijah, describes how we feel and act when we are separated, or when we lose a loved one (v.12). In our encountering with the sacred God, we are empowered in our discipleship ministry. If we are not, then might we ask, what is holding us back? Who is holding us back? When is it time to 'let go' and allow God's baptismal waters, the whirlwinds and clouds ascending us to new heights and new horizons, and the purging fire that cleanses, lights our way towards change, and warms our being when we are cold and losing our grip/way,

Mark's Gospel today hints at God being an intimidating presence. Peter, James,

and John were terrified (v.6) but are privileged to witness the mystery and realm of God's presence on the mountain. Before their eyes, Jesus is transfigured as Elijah and Moses, two great Prophets who parted the sea/river with a rod/mantle and crossed to the other side, now stand in conversation with Jesus (v.4), echoing the events in the Hebrew Scriptures.

There is no need to feel intimidated. Peter recognises the sacredness of the moment on the mountain hence his response to Jesus (v.5) in suggesting preserving the sacred in dwellings. The God of Jesus Christ gathers those towards the dazzling flames of God's glory! That is, it is those who are committed in the baptismal covenant sealed in Christ Jesus, who will know the extent of God's grace and mercy, and will not be afraid.

The voice in the clouds, the presence of God, repeats the words at Jesus' baptism, "This is my Son, the Beloved." (Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17-18). Though Mark's Gospel on Jesus' baptism, only Jesus hears the voice from heaven. In today's gospel text, the voice in the clouds is calling Peter, James and John, to listen to Jesus. As exciting and terrifying the disciples must have

felt, Jesus commands them to tell no one. Jesus' identity is to remain a secret. The time has not yet come for the disciples to proclaim the good news. Pay attention, friends, as we move into Lent and begin to feel the tension building as Jesus' ministry continues...**To God be the glory! Amen.**

Song: TIS 430 Your words to me are life and health...

Response to God's Word

Offertory Prayer: (*offertory brought forward during last verse TIS 430*)

God of glory,
though we find ourselves in different circumstances,
we are thankful that you journey with us and provide for all our needs.
We offer time, talent, and treasure,
may you bless our gifts for your ministry in the world.
In the name of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Notices – Life’s joys and community concerns *Iris Whitehurst*

Five-day lockdown Sat 13th Feb-Wed 17th Feb. NO Sunday Worship today. NO Ash Wednesday Service 17th Feb.

Church Council Thurs 18th Feb 12noon (if Lockdown lifted).

If Lockdown continues we will email, hand delivering , or posting Worship Services (as previously done in 2020).

Please continue to pray and uphold one another by phone, zoom, email, or in your daily walks, in our care for our congregation and wider community.

Pancake Fund Raiser – 18/2 10am-noon

Church Council meet 18/2 12noon

Plant & Garage Sale 20/2 8.30 - noon

Prayers of the People *Heather Russell*

Holy Creator,

in the shadows of this world, working for a politic of justice;

May we be people of the transfiguration.

In the conflict of the world, living lives of peace;

In the prejudices and greed of natural resources not shared;

May we be people of the transfiguration.

In the grieving of your people, being the presence of hope;

In the propaganda of authoritarian nations, being the way of truth;

May we be people of the transfiguration.

In living out the faith, being the community of love;

In the needs of your people, being the hands of heaven;

May we be people of the transfiguration.

In the bad news of the papers, being the good news of God;

In the mundane tasks of this world, being the presence of your glory;

May we be people of the transfiguration.

The Lord’s Prayer *(pray in the language/version of your choice)*

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come,

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Sending Out

Song: TIS 547 Be thou my vision...

Blessing/Dismissal

Friends do not be afraid.

We may fail; God does not.

We may end; God does not.

We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ.

And the blessing of God: Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit remain with you.

Amen.

Recessional: TIS 212 Christ, whose glory fills the skies...

Worship continues into the week...

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Acknowledgements:

CCLI License No. 5062286

Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit Resources

For pastoral matters, worship, conversation or enquiries:

Rev S. Juliette Maua’i

UCA Minister (Part-time: Sun Tues Thurs)

St Stephen’s Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia

179 Melbourne Road Williamstown VIC 3016 Australia

m: 0456 690 291 / e: asoil@bigpond.com

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We are quick to find our faith in systems that ensure our entitlement.
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2 Kings 2:1-12 – Elijah Ascends to Heaven

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