



Last Sunday after the Epiphany

27 February 2021

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio--seeking to know and serve Christ in loving service to the campus, the community, and the world.

"Transfiguration" by our friend Kelly Latimore, see larger version below.

The Lessons

Lessons for the Last Sunday after the Epiphany: Exodus 34: 29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3: 12-4:2; Luke 9: 28-36.

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

O God, who before the passion of your only begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Gospel

Luke 9:28-36

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. 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.

The Sermon



When Mountains are Made Low

Did you notice both of today's readings feature mountains? We heard Moses went down a mountain in the Old Testament reading and Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples in the Gospel. Mountains are mentioned more than any other geographical feature in the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. It was on a mountain top that Noah's ark came to rest as the flood waters receded. It was on a mountain that Abraham learned about God's grace after being tested. It was on a mountain that Moses received the 10 Commandments from God, and it was on a mountain that the prophet Elijah felt God pass by in holy silence.

In all these stories, mountains were not only places where people encountered the awesome power and presence of God, it is where they experienced the liberation – the freedom – that comes from following God. This is not the freedom to do whatever someone wants. That is not freedom, but a form of selfishness where a person is not free, but controlled by their desires, prejudices, arrogance, and ignorance that most of the time only leads to injustice, suffering, and even death. The freedom that comes from following God is the freedom from selfishness and greed.

When the ark came to rest on the mountain, it was the beginning of a fresh start. People were free to live under the promise God will not destroy the earth by flood, and they were free to live the same promise to not destroy one another. The mountain where Moses encountered God features prominently in the story of Exodus, the people of Israel's journey from bondage under Pharaoh of Egypt to being people free to worship God in their own land. The commandments Moses brought down the mountain weren't meant to be restrictions; they were guidance on how to live as God's people. But people have a way of taking something that was intended to be freeing or liberating and making it constricting, that is why freedom is often rejected for selfishness.

Sometimes, though, someone does get it. Someone understands receiving God's love and following the way of Jesus is liberating. The late Walter Wangerin, a Lutheran pastor and former writer in residence at Valparaiso University realized this when he and his wife had an encounter with God and a mountain.

This mountain is none other than the great one, Denali, in Alaska where Walter and his wife were on vacation and discerning if they should move to a new city. This move meant significant changes for them and their family, and they weren't sure it was the right thing to do. They were praying for God to tell them if they should move or not, and God was not responding to this prayer.

Despite the spiritual nature of their time in Alaska, Walter and his wife did not climb the mountain. Instead, a bush pilot flew them to Denali in his small plane, so they could see the mountain from the air. The pilot got so close to the mountain that, as Walter described in his book *Whole Prayer*, he was terrified by its enormity. The sheer size and wildness of the mountain made him tremble at his own smallness and lack of control. The frightening experience revealed to him why mountains are places where people encounter God. The size and wildness of the mountain reminded Walter God is much bigger and wilder and powerful than he is and could ever imagine being.

But it wasn't until Walter and his wife were driving to the city of Anchorage that he realized the true lesson of the mountain and God. He wrote the drive was a stressful one over icy, snow-covered roads in a snowstorm where the road was nearly impossible to see let alone navigate. They had to get to Anchorage by a certain time, so it was not an option to stop. Eventually the snow let up enough for him to see better. He stopped the car, and they got out to stretch and breath and let the stress go. When he turned around Walter saw the great mountain Denali behind them. His wife said, "It's been here with us the whole time just like God has been here with us." Later, she expressed what Walter was thinking, that revelation was an answer to their prayer about relocating and she said, "It's all right Wally, we can go to a new place." He heard freedom in the word: *can*. Not must. Can. That was the answer to their prayer. They were free to choose because God is with them and always will be. There is no country or city or town or valley or river or plain or road or forest or mountain where God is not. Experiencing the awesomeness of God on the mountain made them realize God answers prayers with what God wants us to know, not always what we ask. God answered Walter's prayer of what choice to make by saying God is with them wherever they are. That means even if they made the wrong choice for them, God would still be with them, and God has a way of redeeming those choices, and that realization is liberating.

This brings us to another mountain; the one Jesus went up in this morning's Gospel. We heard the disciples Jesus brought with him had a terrifying experience there, not unlike Walter Wangerin's experience with Denali. And perhaps that is the point. In his prayer, Jesus embraced that wildness and tremendousness of God and through that Love of God came to understand what was next for him: a new journey of liberation for all people. Not from slavery under Pharaoh, but freedom from sin that does whatever it wants, a horrible greed that gobbles up goodness and love and leaves so much suffering in its wake. A selfish greed that will even take the life of another without remorse.

As Jesus went down the mountain after his transfiguration, he also continued to manifest the Kingdom of God or Heaven here on earth by fulfilling the promise of the prophets that God will bring the mountains down and lift the valleys up. This equalizing isn't about physically destroying geographical features on earth, it's what Walter Wangerin and his wife experienced when the snowstorm subsided, and they saw the

mountain and realized there is no place God isn't. God is everywhere: where there is peace, where there is war, where there is joy, where there is suffering, where there is growth, where there is decline, where there is conflict, where there is anxiety, where there is boredom or tedium, where there is fear. God is with us no matter where we are, which doesn't mean we are free to be selfish or our choices don't matter. It means we are free to follow God's ways of loving God and our neighbors, even when it is hard or challenging.

Today is the last Sunday in the Season of Epiphany. During this season, we've explored the ways God's love manifests in Jesus and how we can shine that same love into the world. Now we turn our faces, with Jesus, to another hill, one with a cross, where that movement of mountains and valleys meeting truly starts in Jesus' choice to embody the love of God even when he was being violently abused and killed. We also turn our faces to the beginning of another Season in the Church Year. Lent begins in only a few days. A season of ashes and naming our need for forgiveness. Some see this time as the Church's attempt to control lives or force good people to give up simple pleasures. But Lent is not about sacrificing ice cream or screen time. It's a reminder that freedom of God is freedom from those impulses that we let control us. And invites us to look up from ourselves to see God in the mountains and valleys and neighbors around us.

As we come to the end of the Season of Epiphany, we do so on a mountain, not a literal one, but a meaningful one, none the less. One that manifests God's love so that we are free to recognize this Love with us any and every time and place we happen to be.

Last Sunday Epiphany, February 27, 2022
The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, OH



[Watch a video of today's sermon here.](#)

Please include in your prayers

In our world, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray also for the people who are suffering from war, especially all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress. We pray for the people of Ukraine.

In our diocese, In our diocese, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

In our parish, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, Rev. Katharin Foster

and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community. We pray for our friends at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Merida, Mexico.

Those Whom our Prayers are Requested: Belle, Bill S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Elena, Gloria R., Gordon, Jan S, Lacey, Laura, Miriam, Sharon, Bill, Annie and Kathleen, Tommy, Jeannet Barratt, Danny Cain, Douglas Campbell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Glinnis Davies, Dick Dean and Phyllis Dean, Richard DeNune, Caryl Docherty, Chris Eaton, Ben Foster, Norm Fox, Jan Gault, Jennifer Hall, Debbie Hunsberger, Nancy and Bob Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Monya Monroe, Julie Nehls, Linda Nippert, Lauren O'Brien, Doug and Michelle Parsons, Jane Patton, Dale Paul, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Ann Shelly, Michael Vaughn, Consuelo Walker and family, Benjamin Woolsey, Emily Woolsey, Zita Zolpys, and we pray for all who care for them. **

Anniversary: Richard and Phyllis Dean (3/3)

Birthdays: Sandy Oney (2/28), Chris Coleman (2/28), Ted Foster (3/1), Zelma Coleman (3/2), Laura Dukes (3/3), Thaden Brient (3/3), Jim Walker (3/5)

For the deceased: Yolanda Moncayo

** Full names for this section are normally not published online but since there is not a printed Sunday Bulletin or in-house 10:30 service, for the time being we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or **grahammowery@aol.com**.

Music

Music for February 27, Last Sunday Epiphany – year C 2022

Prelude – [Chorale Prelude “Songs of Thankfulness and Praise”](#) (Hymn 145 - Salzburg)
Johann Pachelbel

[Gloria - S280](#)

Offertory Hymn – Hymnal 135 [“Songs of thankfulness and praise”](#)

[Sanctus - S130](#)

Communion Music -- [Chorale-prelude on “O wondrous type, O vision fair”](#) (Hymn 137 – Wareham) Healey Willan

Postlude -- [Chorale-prelude on “How bright appears the morning star”](#) Robert Hobby



At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams via Vimeo its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched later without having to log in.

<https://vimeo.com/event/4306>

Though the doors of the National Cathedral in Washington are, like ours, temporarily closed, there's much to explore at the the Cathedral's online portal.

<https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Coming Up:

Wednesday, March 2, 11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. - - Ashes to Go

Wednesday, March 2, 5:30 p.m. - - Imposition of Ashes and Holy Eucharist

Sunday, March 6, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, March 9, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting, Julie's

Sunday, March 13, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, March 16, 12:15 p.m. - - Lenten Organ Meditation

Thursday, March 17, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting, ZOOM

Sunday, March 20, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, March 23, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting, Julie's

Wednesday, March 23, 12:15 p.m. - - Lenten Organ Meditation

Sunday, March 27, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, March 30, 12:15 p.m. - - Lenten Organ Meditation

**CrossRoads Café now open Sundays after church service
and Monday - Friday 9:30 - 11:30 am.**

Notes

Ash Wednesday March 2, 2022

Ashes to Go 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Front Porch of the Church

Service 5:30 p.m.
Inside Church



We invite you to accept the invitation to a Holy Lent either by stopping by for Imposition of Ashes on the porch or joining us for a simple service of Imposition of Ashes and Holy Eucharist. Both are good ways to begin the season of "creating new and contrite hearts" within each of us. (Drawing by Mother Deborah)



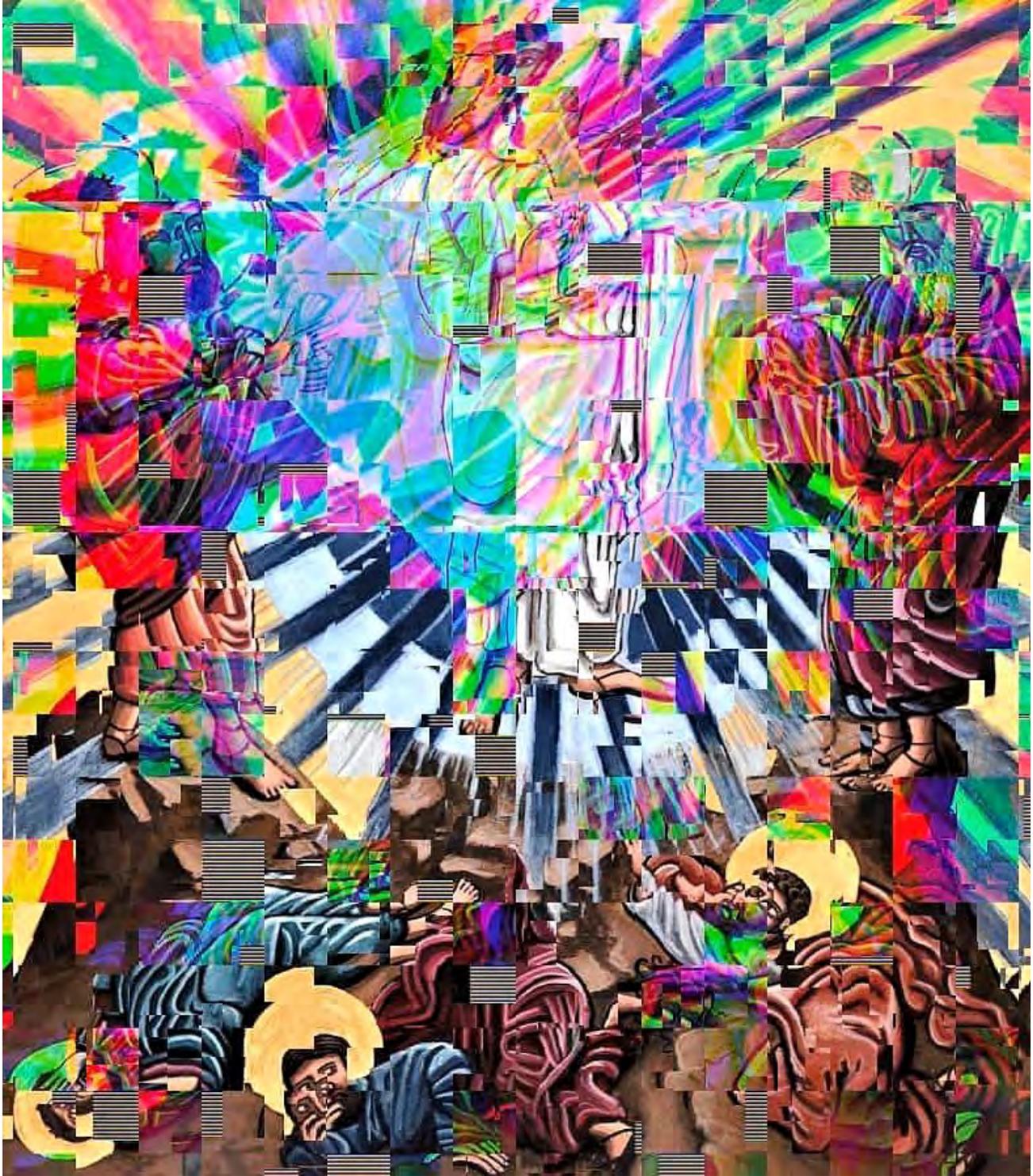
Today we blessed the new frontal, falls, burse and veil David Burton is giving in memory of his mother, Louise, and we gave a prayer of thanks for the frontal set they are replacing.

[View a short video clip here.](#)

Look at this sure sign of Spring!!



Below: "Glitch Transfiguration" by [Kelly Latimore Icons](#). For those more recently on the scene Kelly Latimore started painting icons in 2011 while he was a member of the Common Friars from 2009-2013 here in Athens at the Good Earth Farm ministry and has turned his gift into a quite successful ministry.



Contacts, Information

Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for returning to in-person worship](#)

As of August 5 the Diocese COVID Guidelines request all persons wear masks inside the church building regardless of

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[Episcopal
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[Episcopal Café](#)

vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.,
Monday through Thursday.
Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office/CrossRoads hours the **thrift shop** and **chapel** are available for individuals.
Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is only open Sundays after the service until the news school year.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at carlsondana@hotmail.com. **For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877). The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

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[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

This takes you to the Parish Home page where you can donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday

Masks are required.