

First Congregational Church of Westfield
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Are We Transformed or Transfigured?

What was your favorite toy or game as a child? What made it fascinating for you. Now if you feel comfortable, turn and talk to the person next to you, or you can get up and move and talk to someone else, but share about your favorite toy or game. If you need a sharing partner, raise your hand and we'll find someone. If you're not comfortable sharing, please bear with us for just a moment or two. Does anyone want to share with the congregation?

I don't remember toys so much as I do games. I loved the game called "Trouble" and, even though it is loud, I consistently bought it for my self-contained classrooms. My grandmother had it at her house and introduced us to it, even though we had seen it on TV. Of course, we had one at our house but I think my father thought it was too noisy so we didn't play it when he was around. The other game we played regularly was Yahtzee! I even taught my parents how to play "Black out Yahtzee" and then they took it and ran. They even made up their own rules.

If you have children and especially grandchildren you can see how toys and games in many ways have changed, even though kids still love to play "Connect Four." But, have you ever seen when kids play with Transformers? They became popular around 1984 with the toys, cartoon series and then series of live action films. They could change their appearance and go from some sort of robot into a truck. I remember seeing the animated series with my nephew but have not seen the live action films.

That leads us to another question. Would you rather be transformed or transfigured? First, let's consider the definitions of both words. To transform is "to make a thorough or

dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of something. We have all been through various transformations at some point in our lives. Maybe our jobs have caused us to transform or change our appearance. For those among us who went to high school and college during the early to mid 1970s, you saw a huge transformation on how students dressed for school, what was acceptable for styles, etc. Have you watched a re-run of All in the Family or the Brady Bunch lately? We found photos at my aunt's house. My mother and her sister were both there and we yelled, "You let us out in public looking like this?"

As we grew older, we learned what was acceptable for the work place, church, and how we should present ourselves. We transformed or, in some cases, conformed to what was expected. We still take some time to transform ourselves if we lose weight, change our hairstyles, or the car we drive. I want to talk today, though, about how we transform spiritually. If we make a thorough or dramatic change, it may take time for us to see the transformation come to fruition. But, have we ever been transfigured?

To transfigure is to transform into something more beautiful or elevated. Have we ever been transfigured? That is a tougher one. We can make ourselves more handsome or beautiful on the surface through clothing, make-up, hair products, etc. Some go as far as having botox injections or other plastic surgery. Let's look at our Scripture today to find a *spiritual* transfiguration.

We have two instances of Transfiguration in our readings today. The first comes from the book of Exodus. We don't get the full effect of the transfiguration of Moses but we get the beginning where he ascends the mountain. Later we read that he is glowing in the radiance of God, so much so that he wears a veil over his face to soften the light. The next comes to us from Matthew's gospel and the more traditional story of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is here that

the Apostles who accompanied Jesus to the mountain top were treated with the transfigured Jesus as “his face shown like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light.”

This allowed Peter, James, and John to understand who Jesus truly was as the Son of God and the Messiah promised to the Hebrew people. In turn, it helps us to understand who Jesus was, as the historical Jesus. It is the story of the divinity of God working through the historical or humanity of Jesus. God reveals God’s self through not just the person of Jesus, but in all that Jesus said and did.

The Transfiguration also helps us to better understand our own relationship with God as a one of Deity to humanity. Sometimes, people can say that they find God in nature, or they find God when they are in the mountains, or at the ocean, or at Niagara Falls. It also allows us to encounter the power of God in our own ministries here at church and in the community. Our faith tells us that we believe that Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead as Christ. The apostles were able to witness this on the mountain top but had to come down to face their lives.

Hopefully, in the season of Lent, we will have the opportunity to go off for a bit, even if for a quiet ride with no radio on, a walk in Stanley Park, the Rail Trail, Noble View or some other place to ponder, reflect and pray. Maybe, we too can find the Transfigured Christ; but, we do will have to come down from our own mountain or come out of our own desert. Will we have been transformed? Transfigured? On our way? I invite you to take this spiritual journey as we begin Lent on Ash Wednesday.

