



KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

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Sunday 15 February 2026 – Transfiguration

Our Service today is led by Richard Smith,
one of our Lay Preachers.

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Sustainability: we care for and strive to restore the integrity of the Earth and all of creation.

Welcome

Kia ora e te Whanau, greetings faith family, welcome to worship at Kauri this morning. We worship today in the shadow of Waitangi and the covenant history that represents for this country as we read of the repeated covenants offered by God to his chosen people through Moses, through Elijah and the other prophets and through Jesus. Yes, today is Transfiguration Sunday the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany during which we reflect on how God's presence in Christ is made real in our world. The final Sunday of the Advent/ Christmas/ Epiphany seasons. Next week we begin our journey of Lent to the cross and to Easter.

The value we are focussing on today is Sustainability, as we reflect on our response to God's call to care for the earth as part of his covenant with us as we respond to his call to become his people.

So let us still ourselves and prepare to join in worship.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Call to Worship

Come people of God, come from the mountain tops of exhilaration,

We come filled with the joy of life and the awe of those who see visions.

Come people of God, come from the depths of despair and depression

We come overwhelmed with the gloom of hopelessness, tied up in knots of fear.

Come from wherever you are, for the Lord of all life loves you as his own.

We come from our nooks and crannies to share in his community of self-giving love.

Opening Prayer

Holy and loving God you come to us in the marvels of our mountain top experiences and in the emptiness of our deepest valleys, help us to recognise you as you meet us through our worst and best days and all those others in-between. Enable us to forgive ourselves as you forgive us for all the nastiness and selfishness we sometimes let into our lives. Guide us to see ourselves as you see us in all our possibilities of love, compassion and creativity.

Lord, mould our vision of ourselves as you work in us to make us into the Body of Christ in this place. Amen.

Hymn HFTC 545: [Lord Be My Vision](#)

(Lyrics: Mary Byrne and Eleanor Hull, Tune: Slane)

Prayer of Centring and Renewal

(based on one in Living Stones by Susan Sayers)

Holy Spirit, wherever our attention has wandered from your calling,
Wherever we have fallen short of your will for us,
And failed to keep the spirit of your law of love,
forgive us and transform us,
so that we walk again the path that leads to life.

Silence

Show us again the vision of Jesus **and help us to walk in His Way.**

Wherever the Church is asked to give leadership on sensitive issues,
Whenever the current expectations of behaviour need to be challenged in the
light of God's love,
Give us the wisdom and courage we need to speak and act with integrity.

Silence

Show us again the vision of Jesus **and help us to walk in His Way.**

Wherever our families and communities are lacking in mutual love and respect,
Wherever destructive relationships cause distress and heartache,
And wherever people are made to feel they don't matter,
Give us a new realisation of our ways and your hopes for us,
So that your kingdom may come and your will be done.

Silence

Show us again the vision of Jesus **and help us to walk in His Way.**

**Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory
Are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn HIOS 9: Beautiful Presence

(Lyrics: Joy Cowley, Tune: Barry Brinson)

1. Beautiful presence, how can we name you?
Words are too small for the one who is all.
How can we speak of your gentleness to us,
The warmth of our hearts in response to your call?

Chorus:

*Beautiful presence, ocean of love,
Strong as forever, soft as a dove.
Words often fail us, but this we know true,
You live within us as we live in you.*

2. There have been times of spiritual blindness,
When error and pain have distorted our sight.
Beautiful presence, you were there with us,
To show us how darkness can turn into light.

Chorus:

3. Nothing that happens to us will be wasted,
All of our living is grounded in grace.
Gently you take down the walls of division,
Leading us on to a larger place.

Chorus:

Scripture Readings *(New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised)*

Our scripture readings this morning are three stories of mountain top experiences, that of Moses, that of Elijah, and that of Jesus as told by Matthew. As we listen to these stories I want you to reflect on your own experiences of being on top of a mountain, of being suddenly struck with awe at a new vista or vision, a new perspective that takes your breath away, an epiphany that leads you to see yourself, your life, reality, in a radically different way from before.

Exodus 24:12-18

¹² The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' ¹³ So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ To the elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.'

¹⁵ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

1 Kings 19:8-18

⁸ He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁰ He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

Elijah Meets God at Horeb

¹¹ He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁴ He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. ¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

Matthew 17:1-9

The Transfiguration

¹⁷ Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³ Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, we will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

Reflection

Have you ever climbed a mountain and experienced a dramatic change in perception? Seen what lay before you in a totally different way? If you have and you remember it that's great. Hold onto that memory.

If you're like me, you probably have an idea you have but can't really bring it to mind suddenly in the moment. But a few days down the track it'll suddenly come to you, the memory will flood back, and you'll think, 'Yes that was amazing. Such a memorable experience. How could I ever forget that!'

Well, either way, if you remember or you don't, or even if climbing mountains is something you'd never do in a lifetime so let's not go there, I want you to listen to the stories in today's readings and relate them to your own experience as best you can. Not all mountains are physical, sometimes the toughest climbs are more internal, a fear pushed aside, a prejudice overcome, a goal persisted with when normally you'd just give up. Those are all real mountains even if metaphorical ones. And what if in climbing such a mountain a cloud comes over you, blots out the normal landmarks you rely on to maintain your sense of direction? Now that could be scary indeed.

I had an experience like that one time, I think it was at a Bible Class camp on MacDonald's farm in the Northern Wairarapa. Some of us had finished the study for the afternoon and there was quite a gap before dinner, so we took off after the group that had gone on a hike up Rangituma mountain. We got to the top as they were preparing to come down again. Well, the view from up there of our familiar Wairarapa valley was incredible! You could see the layers on layers of hills to the East and even a glimpse of the sea, the Pacific Ocean. To the West there were the sharp peaks of the Tararua Range and to the South, laid out almost like a map, the valley, stretching away, flat, green with little marks of roads and ribbons of rivers and patches of towns and in the far distance the shimmering lake that gave the valley its name with Lake Ferry beyond, then the sea, Cook Strait. Our hometown, Masterton looked so small and insignificant. Then someone called out, "Look there's a cloud forming. We'd better get moving." Off we went back to the track and started down the hillside, but the rapidly developing cloud quickly blotted out the occasional markers we had so confidently used to guide us uphill. There we were surrounded by thick mist, able to see only a few feet in front of us, knowing it would soon be dark. We slowly made our way down and were met by a party sent out to find us, so we didn't have to spend forty days and forty nights up there, fortunately. But it did give me an experience of just how different your perspective on familiar things and places can be when you see them from a mountain height. And how totally disorientating it can be to be enveloped in cloud.

I had a somewhat similar experience of a change in perspective and disorientation in reading the scriptures for today and then the various commentaries on our Gospel from the Theological College Library.

I had always understood the story of Jesus taking his closest three disciples up the mountain as a story of an event that happened in Palestine in Jesus' lifetime. When I read how the scholars have understood the story it opened my eyes to see what Matthew means by this story in quite a different light. It is the ultimate Epiphany story! That's why it fits so well here on the last Sunday in Epiphany.

Let's back up a bit. In the first chapter of Matthew's gospel he tells us Jesus is to be called, "Emmanuel, God with us" (Mt 1:23). As we look at his whole gospel, while he never uses that name for him, this is what Matthew is telling us again and again, over and over.

He draws on every story his Jewish hearers would have known from childhood to link Jesus with their faith history and ours. Here he draws on the ultimate two comparisons, Moses and Elijah, the sources of the Law or Torah and the prophetic tradition of God's speaking to his people, calling them back into relationship with Him. Here Matthew depicts the ultimate realisation of who Jesus really is, Jesus flanked by Moses and Elijah is overshadowed by the bright cloud, symbol of the presence of God. From the cloud comes the divine voice, "This is my son, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" And when they looked again, they saw Jesus alone. How more clear and dramatic could Matthew be? HERE IS GOD WITH US!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Epiphany is the period of several weeks in which the church reflects on the manifestation of Christ to all peoples. The title Christ means "Anointed by God". What Matthew is spelling out to his hearers, and to us, is exactly that, that in Jesus we are seeing the one who is anointed by God; Listen to him. The staggering sequel to the story is that the journey next leads, not, as the disciples expected, onwards and upwards to the heavenly realm, but to the cross. The challenge to the disciples, and to us, after the exhilaration of the mountain top is, will we listen to Jesus and follow him to the cross? For that is the Way of Jesus. God's glory is revealed finally in his willingness to give of himself, to transform humanity into his kingdom. The challenge for us is, are we willing to follow, become his anointed, share in the self-giving love that alone can transform this society into God's kingdom?

Today, Transfiguration. Ahead, Ash Wednesday, Lent, the trial and the cross of Good Friday before the transformation of Easter. Anyone for a climb?

Hymn HIOS 15: Christ Has Changed The World's Direction

(Lyrics: Shirley Murray, Tune: Barry Brinson)

1. Christ has changed the world's direction!
Christ can change the human heart:
agents of the new creation
mend the people torn apart;
so are we
charged to be
go-betweens for unity.

2. Peace will be our way of thinking:
common wealth and common state.
Gone the wounds, the words and weapons
that conspire to hurt and hate,
 and no power
 shall devour
earth or air where peace might flower.

3. Debts and doubts will be forgiven,
cancelled in the name of God,
olive trees again be planted
there where soldiers' boots have trod,
 hunger fed,
 terror fled,
justice shining in its stead.

4. What have we as commendation,
sent to speak, as speak we must?
Love will be our global language,
hands an enemy can trust,
 faith to faith,
 race with race,
all shall find a meeting place.

5. Envoys of a High Commission,
gifts of hope we find to share,
Christ the Spirit reconciling,
Christ our internet of care.
 Though we stall,
 fail or fall,
shall we now refuse God's call?

Offering

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Lord, we give you thanks for the highs and the lows of our lives,

We give you thanks for the one you sent to be Emanuel, God with us.

Bless us and all our giving of time, talents and possessions,

Enable us to become channels of your loving care and justice in this world. Amen.

Community Time: Notices, Celebrations, Concerns for Prayer

Prayers of the People *(based on one in Let us Pray by Janet Nelson)*

As we gather before God in Prayer let us give thanks for all we have to celebrate, for the insights we have been given and the understandings we have developed.

We celebrate

We are also aware that all is not well in the world and in our community.

Let us pray for those we know who need to experience God's presence and love

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On Mount Sinai, God in his glory overshadowed Moses and gave him his holy law:

**May your world today, O Lord, receive your wisdom and Word,
that nations may dwell in peace and be governed for the good of all.**

On the mountain of transfiguration God revealed Christ's glory and majesty:

**May your church today, Lord, reveal your glory to others,
That your gospel may be proclaimed in all the world.**

On the mountaintop Peter, James and John trembled in the presence of Christ's glory:

**May the communities in which we live glimpse the splendour of His
compassion, that we may live in relationships which reflect His transfiguring
love.**

Amen.

Hymn AA 155: Where Mountains Rise to Open Skies

(Lyrics: Shirley Murray, Tune: Vernon Griffiths (Dunedin))

1. Where mountains rise to open skies
your name, O God, is echoed far,
from island beach to kauri's reach,
in water's light, in lake and star.
2. Your people's heart, your people's part
be in our caring for this land,
for faith to flower, for aroha*
to let each other's mana** stand.
3. From broken word, from conflict stirred,
from lack of vision, set us free
to see the line of your design,
to feel creation's energy.
4. Your love be known, compassion shown,
that every child have equal scope:
in justice done, in trust begun
shall be our heritage and hope.

5. Where mountains rise to open skies
your way of peace distil the air,
your spirit bind all humankind,
one covenant of life to share!

Commissioning and Blessing

Go now people of God, made in God's image, go with God's blessing,
We go to care for the Earth and all the creatures in it.

Go, prepared to behold visions of His hopes and will for you.

We go ready to climb whatever mountains he sets in our path.

Go, knowing God sent a baby to show us the way to his kingdom

We go ready to live his life into our lives and the life of this world.

Sung Amen

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