

For other World Mission Sunday resources,
please visit the World Mission Sunday web site at
www.episcopalchurch.org/agr/wmsunday

Transformation

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2004

Transformation is the theme of World Mission Sunday this year. Transformation is a key word in the vision of the Standing Commission on World Mission, presented to the General Convention last summer and published as *Companions in Transformation: The Episcopal Church's World Mission in a New Century*. By resolution of General Convention, all Episcopalians are urged to study, reflect, and give feedback on this document during this triennium. World Mission Sunday is an excellent time to begin this process.

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany, when we observe the Transfiguration of Jesus, is the time chosen by General Convention for the observance of World Mission Sunday. The Greek word for both transformation and transfiguration is *metamorphoo*, root of the word metamorphosis. An enduring symbol of metamorphosis is the butterfly, so dramatically changed (and beautified) from its larval and caterpillar states. Hence the World Mission Sunday poster this year portrays a butterfly.



Scripture for the Journey

by Tracy R. Andrés
The Episcopal
Church Center

Transformation – active and anticipated...

I did my word study at <http://bible.crosswalk.com/>. The best yield came from the New Testament for the words/phrases *transform*, *transfigure* and *change appearance*. The Greek words that these translations refer to are *metamorphoo*, *metaschematizo*, and *ginomai heteron*.

These passages suggest that the experience of transformation is a “glorious” one. It inspires praise, adoration and worship. In a time such as ours, when change is so frequent and so bewildering, these verses remind

us of the close association that change may have with the Divine. A new response, a new behavior, a new outlook—all of these can be both sign and substance of God’s presence. The entire story of God’s salvation shows that realms rise and fall, people live and die, new things are revealed, old things may go.

And He was **transfigured** before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. (Matthew 17:2)

Six 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,... (Mark 9:2)

And while he was praying, the appearance of his [Jesus’] face **changed**, and his clothes became dazzling white. (Luke 9:29)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being **transformed** into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

He [Lord Jesus Christ] will **transform** the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. (Philippians 3:21)

Transformation – active and difficult...

Change is not only active and anticipated. Change can also be devastating, painful and disorienting.

Consistency, predictability, habit—these are necessary components of our human life. They are a part of the predictable patterns of existence that we need in order to make sense of our world and to live in it with wisdom and compassion. In the presence of transformation, however, these things are suspended as the new replaces the old. Then one must move on to discover or create new patterns and new paths.

Embracing this essential aspect of human life honestly and fully challenges one to exercise two gifts that God has given us. One is the gift of discernment, which calls us to be aware of what is happening and to make value judgments and choices. This is summed up beautifully in one part of the Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” The second gift is the opportunity — if we have the gratitude and courage in the face of what is in our control and what is not — to open ourselves actively to God’s direction. Reflection within ourselves and with others is crucial, but reflection and contemplation with God are essential.

How awesome and profound is the process of transformation—of change—no matter how gentle or radical it may be. It engages everything in one’s life, so that one is present to life’s fullness as well as participating fully in it. This is not always a comfortable or pleasant experience, but it is a reality of life. What can make a divine difference, however, is the quality and extent of our willingness to place our very human experience of change and transformation before God’s heart in prayer, and seek not only comfort but courage for the journey.

O God, who on the holy mount revealed to chosen witnesses your well-beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening: Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may by faith behold the King in his beauty; who with you, O Father, and you, O Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Collect for the Feast of the Transfiguration – BCP, Page 243)

Being “a companion for transformation” in the life of world

Transformation is not an experience for a single individual. As we are all part of Christ’s Body, we are called to experience transformation together. Christ’s Body lives throughout the world, residing in different countries, cultures and contexts. We are always invited to be companions, witnesses, pilgrims, servants, prophets, ambassadors, hosts and sacramental presences to each other, whether we know each other or not.

One concrete step that many Episcopalians have already taken is to prayerfully consider how our Church should engage in global mission in the future. At General Convention 2003, our Church asked all of us to re-dedicate ourselves to that future by studying the vision statement created by the Standing Commission on World Mission. This document, ***Companions in Transformation: The Episcopal Church’s World Mission in a New Century***, is available from Morehouse Publishing. Call 1-800-877-0012 or order online at www.morehousegroup.com/mp.htm. Its recommendations include:

- expand mission education;
- increase numbers and diversity of missionaries;
- support short-term mission pilgrimages and cross-cultural training in seminaries;
- expand ecumenical and interfaith collaboration;
- broaden companion diocese relationship programming; and
- strengthen mission networking.

There may be ways to engage in global mission that have not been mentioned. The Standing Commission on World Mission and World Mission Interpretation and Networks wants to hear those dreams and stories of global mission in action. Please contact Margaret Larom, World Mission Interpretation and Networks Officer at 1-800-334-7626 or email her at mlarom@episcopalchurch.org for further information.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

(A Prayer of Self-Dedication – BCP, Page 832)