

TRANSFORMATION IS GOD'S WAY

*I asked the Lord for a bunch of fresh flowers
But instead He gave me an ugly cactus with many thorns
I asked the Lord for some beautiful butterflies
But instead He gave me many ugly and dreadful worms.
I was threatened.
I was disappointed.
I mourned.
But after many days, suddenly,
I saw the cactus bloom with many beautiful flowers
And those worms became beautiful butterflies flying in the wind.
God's way is the best way. [Chun-Ming Kao]*

The Rev. Dr. Chun-Ming Kao was General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. In the 1980s he was one of the leaders of a protest gathering in Taiwan celebrating Human Rights. The gathering was a call for democracy in Taiwan. He was arrested and sentenced to 7 years in prison. He served 4 years of that sentence. While he was in prison he composed the above poem.

We are in Eastertide – the season of Transformation. Before transformation can happen, sacrifice, taking risk and even death must come first. We all love the idea of transformation – a vision of a better alternative of the present. But not very many are willing to pay the price.

Easter happened through suffering (Passion), death (Calvary) and entombment (Holy Saturday). As they say, “no pain, no gain,” “No thorn, no crown.” Jesus is the man who was willing to pay the costly price of transformation so the better order becomes possible. He was willing to die on the cross so the world may live. He was willing to pay the price of sin and evil and death to give us salvation. Through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection we are reconciled us to God, to one another and the rest of God’s creation, and to our better self. Christ paid the costly price of sin and death.

Our mission as United Methodists is to make and mature disciples for the transformation of the world. Making disciples is our sole mission. The fruit of doing our mission is the transformation of lives and situations. To be faithful to our mission means –

- We must be willing to carry our cross and carry it every day as we follow Christ (Matthew 16);
- Be willing to receive pruning so we become fruitful (John 15)

- Be willing to fall and buried to the ground like grains so we will rise up again with more shoots and in due time we will bring forth more flowers and fruits for the harvest (John 12)
- Be willing to serve rather than to be served, to be the last, to give our lives as ransom for many (Mark 10)
- To preach good news to the poor, giving sights to the blind, healing to the sick, and freedom to the captives and oppressed (Luke 4)
- To welcome every one especially the children, the lost, the last and the least (Matthew 18, 25; Galatians 3:28).
- Preaching and practicing full salvation for all people and creation (Matthew 4:23-25; Romans 8:18-25).

The renowned preacher Philips Brooks said, "O, do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men [women, youth and children]! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks! Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God."

May we be faithful agents of transformation by loving God with all we have and are, loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, and caring for mother earth as our home. So be it.

With all my love and prayers,

Juancho

WORSHIP IN APRIL 2017
Sunday Worship Service ~ 9:00 AM
 Communion ~ every first Sunday

- April 2** - **5th Sunday in Lent (Purple)**
 Lessons: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130 (UMH 848); Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45
 Sermon: "Forgive Us Our Debts"
- April 9** - **Palm/Passion Sunday (Purple, Red or Scarlet)**
 Liturgy of the Palms: Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (UMH 839). Liturgy of the Passion: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16 (UMH 764) Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14 – 27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54
 Sermon: "Lead Us Not Into Temptation"
- April 13** - **Maundy Thursday Seder Meal & Communion Service at 6:30 pm.** Host: Community UMC, Hazel Crest

Lessons: Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (UMH 837); 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31-35
Sermon: The Meal of Transformation

- April 14** - **Grace UMC and Community UMC
Joint Good Friday Tenebrae Service at 7:00 pm
Host: Grace UMC, Blue Island**
Sermon: "The Cross of Transformation"
- April 16** - **Festival of the Resurrection/Easter Sunday
(White or Gold)**
Easter Breakfast starting at 8 am – c/o United Methodist
Men and Dr. Velda Wright
Easter Egg Hunt following the service
Lessons: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (UMH 839);
Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10
Sermon: "... Forever and Ever, Amen."
- April 23** - **Second Sunday of Easter (White or Gold)**
Lessons: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16 (UMH 748); 1 Peter 1:3-9;
John 20:19-31
Ford Rabon, Preaching
- April 30** - **Third Sunday of Easter (White or Gold)**
Lessons: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter
1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35
Sermon: "A Walk to Emmaus"

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO A STUDY ON THE APOSTLE'S CREED

The Apostle's Creed, believed to have been written around 180 AD, is the summary of what the Christian church believe. I would like to offer a class on this basic faith of our church to all who want to revisit or renew the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. We will meet on Mondays starting at 7 or 7:30 PM on May 15, 22, 29, June 5, 12, and 19.

I believe this is not in competition to any study in church going on because this is about the basic faith of the universal Christian church. I encourage everyone to attend if they can make this schedule fit in within their larger itineraries in the month of May and June. To understand better the Bible's witness on the fundamentals of our faith, we will be using the book written by United Methodist Pastor, the Rev. Adam Hamilton as our supplemental guide. I hope you will be able to join us. Anyone interested, please let me know so I can order enough books. Let me know also which is a better time to start 7 or 7:30 in the evening. Every class will last no more than 1.5 hours (90 minutes) per session. You may email me (Pastor Juancho) back or call/text me at 630-457-8794.

HONORING MOTHERS (May 14) and FATHERS (June 18).

Mothers and Fathers are coming sooner than we think. We would like to honor the fathers and mothers (living or dead) in our church. We ask that you send us your favorite picture of your mother or father. If you have an access to computer and scanner, please email to me (Pastor Juancho) or to Lorretta, an electronic copy. My email is jcampanano@gmail.com. If you don't have an access to scanner or computer, you may give me a hard copy of your parent's pictures no later than April 30 for Mother's Day and May 31 for Father's Day. We will find a way to project or show them to you during our worship services on May 14 and June 18.