

Dear St. Peter,

Last fall, we voted to adopt a congregational goal for 2018: to focus on God's call to *be transformed* (Rom 12:2). This year, along with the Mission Leadership Team, I want to invite you to consider more closely what this goal means for YOUR life and our LIFE TOGETHER.

At its heart, transformation is about a change (“trans-”) to the shape of our life, our way of “be-ing” in the world (“form”). On our own, our being takes the shape of the First Adam; we sin by denying God's rule in our lives and so make choices that lead to our own death and destruction. But in Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, we receive a new, life-giving way of being (Romans 5).

According to Romans 12:2, at the center of this transformation is a change to our *minds*: “be transformed by the renewal of your minds.”

The mind is so central to forming every aspect of our being. Through its perception of reality, its formation of ideas, and its use of logic, the mind presents us with a particular vision of what is true, and good, and beautiful. That vision then guides everything else we think, decide, do, and say. In renewing our minds, God thus changes our sinful, “Old Adam” way of thinking and seeing things into *His way*—the way of the New Adam, Jesus Christ. He shows us what *really is* true, good, and beautiful, so that this vision might guide all of our living and doing. By renewing our minds, God thus ultimately transforms the whole of our being.

This transformation is of course worked by the Holy Spirit as He brings us to faith in Christ and conforms us to His way of life. However, the Spirit also uses particular “tools” to accomplish this change. Thus, to fully receive God's transforming power, it is helpful to **identify some of these tools and ponder how to incorporate them more deeply in our lives:**

Some of these tools bring us into a direct encounter with God. Perhaps the most obvious and central tool is Scripture. Our minds are expanded and changed as we read or hear something new in God's Word, remember something forgotten, or learn to see passages in a new light. Our minds are also changed as we encounter God in worship and the sacraments, which extend the Word to all our senses, including not only sight and hearing but also taste, touch, and smell. And, our minds are changed as we interact with God in the life of continual prayer.

But there are also other tools, like our encounters with different people and different experiences, which can open our eyes to realities and truths we previously did not see. Our lives can

also be changed by practices or disciplines we *intentionally* foster—outreach, fasting, service, active relationships with “the least of these” (Mt. 25), and more. Sometimes, there are truths that we just cannot see unless we change our angle of vision, our usual (and easier) ways of being in the world. Vice versa, there are also things about ourselves that can’t be changed simply by trying to think better thoughts. As Millard Fuller, co-founder of Habitat for Humanity, liked to say, sometimes “it is easier to act yourself into a new way of thinking than it is to think yourself into a new way of acting.”

The season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14), is a particularly good time to cultivate such disciplines. Still, thinking itself remains an important tool in God’s toolbox: dwelling on particular bible passages and themes like creation, salvation, kingdom life, discipleship; thinking about their inner connections; and consciously reflecting on what we are learning from our encounters, experiences, practices, and disciplines.

Of course, **ultimately the greatest transformation and renewal of our minds happens when we try out new tools and also bring them all together.**

Accordingly, this month we encourage YOU to **personally increase your use of these sources of transformation and try out some new things.** Stretch yourself. It’s worth it!

However, as we know, God does not just relate to us individually but as a Body in which we are mutually enriched by each other’s gifts, insights, and experiences. So we also want to invite you to **share how you are being transformed, and see how others are,** in the following ways:

“Being Transformed Story Box” – this year we want to use our Discipleship Story Box in the narthex for short stories about how God is transforming your being. We will use these stories *anonymously* in our newsletter, and perhaps in other ways, to share ideas and encouragement. Just answer the simple questions: “how is God transforming YOUR being?” For example: “Our Bible study has been doing Ecclesiastes, which emphasizes that there is nothing new under the sun. In the past, that kind of discouraged me but now it gives me peace: God has seen it all, so He can certainly handle what I’m going through!” You might think especially in terms of specific tools you have tried. You might also think about how a particular transformation of your being is affecting your experience of our core discipleship goals of spiritual care, outreach, and stewardship.

With Joy in Christ and in You,

Pastor Clark