

This sermon is available on youtube: <https://youtu.be/IVbz0jSkSb0>

Good morning, church. I am Pastor Matt Gillard, and I hope I am familiar to many of you worshipping today. For those who may not know me, I had the joy of serving the Moravian congregations of Heimtal from 2009 to 2020, and Good Shepherd from 2020 to 2021. I now serve in the Lutheran Church in Hanna, Alberta, and it is truly an honour to share a pastoral word with my sisters and brothers across the Canadian District.

Today is **Transfiguration Sunday**—the day we remember Jesus going up the mountain with three of his closest disciples to pray. And while they are there, something extraordinary happens. Jesus is transfigured before them. His face shines like the sun. His clothes become dazzling white. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appear, speaking with him.

It is a moment of holy revelation—of clarity, presence, and divine nearness.

But it is also a moment of formation. Because what happens on the mountain is not meant to stay on the mountain. It is meant to shape how the disciples live when they come back down.

And that story made me think about the Moravian Church in the 1720s—about a kind of transfiguration of our own.

After years of exile following the Thirty Years' War, Moravian refugees from Prague found refuge on the land of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf. Herrnhut, as we now remember it, was not born as a peaceful or unified community. It was full of tension, clashing personalities, theological differences, and deep conflict. Spiritual wanderers and displaced people lived together, but unity did not come easily.

So deep were the divisions that one Moravian leader went up a hill overlooking the settlement, convinced God was about to destroy the community like Sodom and Gomorrah. That didn't happen—but it tells us something important: things were not well.

What changed everything was prayer.

Zinzendorf began gathering leaders for disciplined, intentional communal prayer. They prayed for hours a day. They read Scripture together. They fasted. They sang. They listened. They sought reconciliation. And slowly, something shifted. Differences lost their power. Division loosened its grip. And out of that spiritual transformation came mission. Out of prayer came movement. Out of communion came calling.

For three hundred years, Moravians have understood themselves as a missional church. And that matters. But I don't believe the future of the Moravian Church in Canada is simply to recreate the mission structures of the past.

I believe the future of the Moravian Church in Canada is to become a people formed in **communal prayer**, shaped in **shared discernment**, and grounded in **spiritual accompaniment**—a church that teaches one another how to listen for God together.

The problem is not that we don't pray.  
The problem is that we no longer pray *together*.

We have privatized prayer. Individualized it. Minimized it. Reduced it to devotionals, quick words before meals, and whispered pleas in moments of fear. All of those matter—but they are not the same as a community learning to seek God together.

We have forgotten the discipline of shared spiritual formation.

And I want to invite you to dream bigger than that.

Not louder. Not flashier.

Deeper. Slower. Rooted. Communal.

I want you to look around in worship today. In every congregation listening, there are two or three people who are known—quietly, humbly—as faithful people of prayer. And I guarantee you they don't think of themselves that way. But they are gifted. They are called. And God has already been forming them for this moment.

So here is my invitation:

Take a piece of paper. A corner of your bulletin. Anything you have.

Write this sentence:

**“I consider you to be a faithful person of prayer in the life of our church.”**

Give it to someone.

If someone gives you one, tell your pastor that some foolish person thinks you're spiritually gifted—and that you've been identified as a prayerful leader in the church.

And then let your pastors gather those people—not to create hierarchy, but to create **formation**. Not to create power, but to create **discipleship**. Let them begin praying together. And from that circle, let smaller circles form. Groups of two, three, four people. Thirty minutes. An hour. Nothing complicated. Nothing fancy. Just prayer. Presence. Listening. Accountability. Discernment. Learn to pray together, and for others.

Because the church does not need better programs.

The church needs deeper roots.

The church does not need louder voices.

The church needs clearer listening.

The church does not need more activity.

The church needs more alignment with the Holy Spirit.

And everything we've heard in this sermon series points us there.

From Pastor Mark, we were reminded that human dignity is not earned—it is given. That prayer must be shaped by belovedness, not shame.

From Pastor Jamie, we were invited into “come and see” faith—learning to pray with open eyes toward what the Spirit is already doing in the world.

From Pastor Aaron, we learned to seek unexpected hope, especially in places of grief and struggle—prayer that forms compassion, not distance.

From Pastor James, we were given a vision of expansive grace and subversive hope—prayer that holds grief and courage at the same time.

From Pastor Michael, we were reminded that being salt and light is a communal calling—prayer that says, “Not my will, but yours be done, O God.”

This is not nostalgia.

This is not survival.

This is not institutional preservation.

This is transformation.

We don't need to become the church we were 300 years ago.

We need to become the church God is forming us to be now.

The question before us is not whether the Moravian Church in Canada will change.  
It will.

The question is whether we will allow the Triune God to shape that change...  
through prayer,  
through humility,  
through listening,  
through community,  
through shared spiritual courage.

Will we go up the mountain together?

Will we learn to listen together?

Will we come back down transformed?

May we have the courage to become a praying church again...

not in fear,

not in control,

not in anxiety,

but in trust,

in unity,

and in hope.

Our Lamb has conquered. Let us follow him.”

Amen.