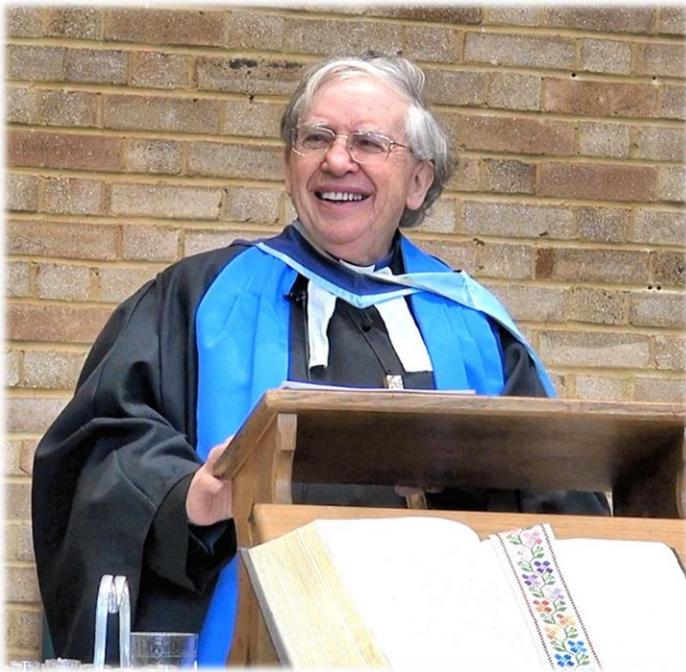


# Communion Service Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February - led by Revd. David Aplin



*The day's two readings both described meetings with God at the top of mountains, bright lights and clouds - Moses receiving stone tablets, and Jesus's Transfiguration.*

David opened with the Riddle of St Ives; lots of people and animals, but ultimately only one person was actually going to St Ives.

Moses had gone up the mountain, David noted, but he had not gone alone—Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu accompanied him, along with seventy elders. In the end though, Moses had been the only one to meet with God directly: the others were only able to witness the dazzling light of God's presence from a distance. It had been a pivotal moment in the Jewish faith. The stones, the ark, the tabernacle, the altar, and the vestments were all specified for the people to see.

Looking at the story of the Transfiguration, we might also ask how many people were present. Matthew's account might have suggested that it was just Jesus, Moses, and Elijah (*though Peter James and John were clearly close enough to talk to Jesus*). The Scripture told us that Peter had offered to build shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. But the reading had also made it clear that, in the end, Jesus had been alone.

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud declared, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased." The disciples present had been filled with fear, but Jesus had approached and touched them gently, telling them not to be afraid. And when they opened their eyes, they saw that Jesus was alone.

So, why was the Transfiguration a solitary event? Jesus had not required the presence of the great prophets to validate His identity. It was far more significant that the Father Himself had proclaimed, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased."

David reflected on the meaning of Jesus' actions, drawing near to the disciples, touching them gently, and telling them not to be afraid. The disciples had enjoyed a close, personal relationship with Jesus. He was not remote, elevated far above them, or like a distant king surrounded by officials and armies. Instead, He was present, someone they could touch, and who could touch them in return.

This was more than stating the obvious—it held meaning for each of us. Our relationship with God was not a matter of us being very low and Him being very high. God had chosen to be close to us, and for us to be close to Him. Our relationship with God was personal, through the Spirit.

Jesus should be our best friend—or, as children might say, our "bestest" friend. He wanted it to be so. We should let Him into our hearts; let Him reach deep into our souls. Jesus loved us—we should love Him in return, loving Him as a close friend, not as a distant figure to be feared.

He'd bent down to comfort His disciples when they were afraid, and He would do the same for us. Throughout our lives, He would encourage us. We were to trust in Him and love Him always.

*A fitting message for the reception of two new church members, Jenny Blumsom and Maureen Marlow – something for us all to celebrate.*



