



# ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

Radix Plenary  
Saint Mark's Cathedral  
September 19, 2021



# OUR TIME TOGETHER THIS EVENING

- Land acknowledgement and opening prayer
- Brief history of Radix Project
- Living in a time of Transition
- Models for Transition as a Spiritual Endeavor
- What do biblical stories of transition/transformation have to say to us?
- Finding God in times such as this...
- Q&A and Breakout Conversations



# RADIX PROJECT—SMALL GROUPS/DEEP ROOTS



- Modeled by Jesus who met with others in small, intimate groups
- Modeled by the early Church in homes where they gathered, prayed, and cared for one another
- A way to know one another, and to be known
- A way to situate our stories in the context of God's story
  - We believe God is up to something here and now
- Small groups serve as substrate for spiritual transformation
- Especially important in this time
- This is the 6<sup>th</sup> iteration of Radix—more than 250 have participated thus far!

# LIVING IN A TIME OF TRANSITION



Pandemic has prompted all sorts of transitions, abrupt and gradual

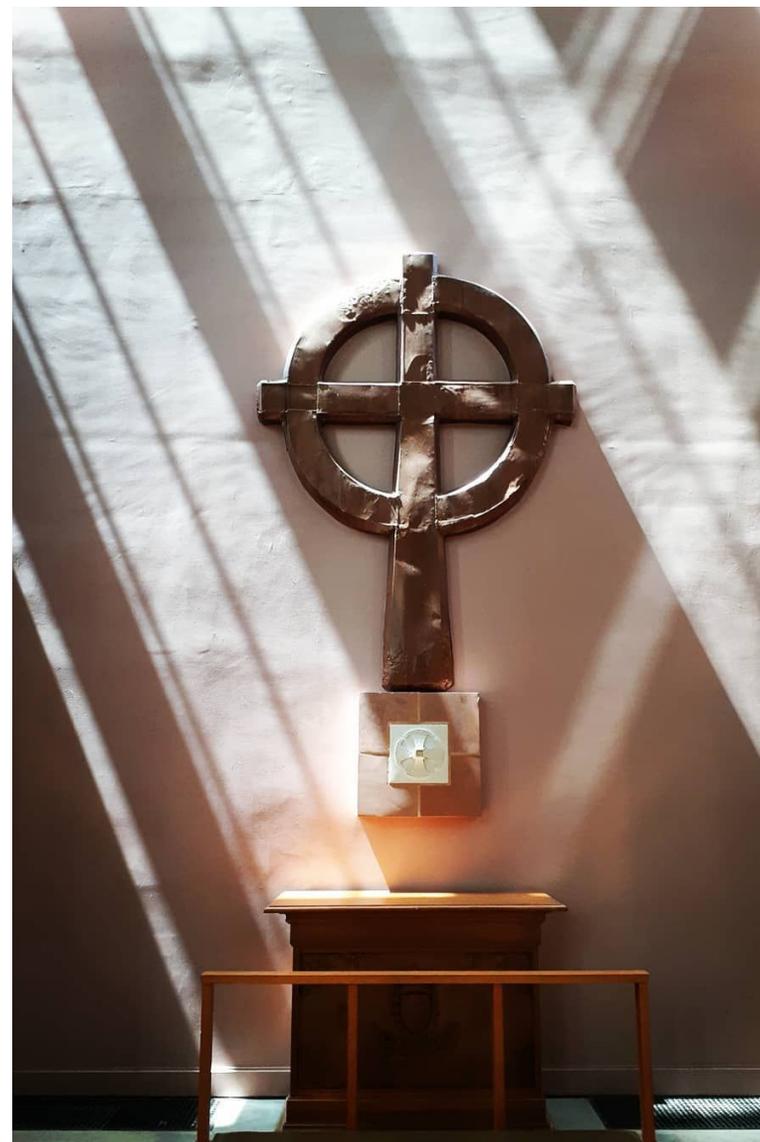
- Homeschooling
- Work from home, Zoom, livestreaming
- “Social distancing” –translation: Isolation from friends and family
- Loss of job, change of job, moves/relocation
- COVID test results, infection, vaccination, stress of seeing non-compliance
- Even “normal” things have been more difficult (groceries, moving, etc.)

Also a time of trying new things

- Weight gain/weight loss
- New spiritual practices, exercise regimen, hobbies, rhythms of the day
- Discerning new vocation
- Moving, buying, selling, traveling

# HOW WE FRAME THESE CHANGES MATTERS

- Some are welcome changes; others unwelcome
- All involve some experience of grief, whether we are aware of it or not, because they involve loss of something familiar
- Can we situate our narrative within the context of our relationship with God? How do we know?



# BREAKOUT GROUPS

Brief  
introduction—name,  
and share:

In what ways has  
the pandemic  
been a period of  
transition for you?



# SOME TERMINOLOGY TO CONSIDER

These terms are not sacrosanct but offered as an aid here:

**Change**—the physical reality of difference

**Transition**—the psychological and spiritual experience of change

**Transformation**—the reordering of one's life as a result of a transitional experience

**Conversion**—a change in religious or faith perspectives as a result of the experience

*\*\*Of course, these are not so well-delineated, but a consciousness about them may be helpful as we seek to contextualize our transitions within the spiritual journey\*\**



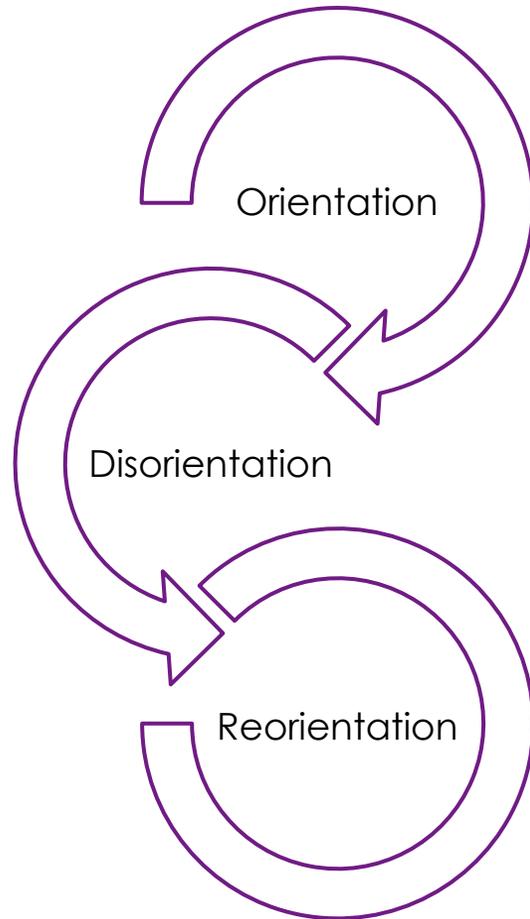
# TRANSITION AS SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOR

Discerning Transformative moments as a spiritual endeavor is not about seeking comfort; they are always challenging, and they will always involve:

- An unsettling from the status quo
- A certain element of unfamiliarity to the new thing
- Require some measure of faith to step into it
- Loss of control, or lack of certitude, or even grief for what is lost



# MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL TRANSITION (BRUEGGEMANN, ROHR)



- Biblical stories show this pattern
- It's the story of the human condition (great literature, etc.)
- Wilderness experience (desert)
- Dying to the old; but new thing not yet clearly known
- New thing (reorientation) never returns to exactly the old way

*Krisis (crisis) = judgment, fork in the road, a moment of truth, not always "bad"*

# AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL: “HINGE MOMENTS”

- D. Michael Lindsey's “Hinge Moments”—literally those inflection points in life that change everything thereafter (think car crash, job change, relationship start or breakup, etc.).
- In 20 years of psychological/spiritual research he identified seven phases to these hinge moments:
  - Transition
  - Discernment
  - Anticipation
  - Intersection
  - Landing
  - Integration
  - Realization
- Sudden changes move through the phases rapidly; slower changes take time
- Intersection is the hardest—the time in between, having left the familiar but not yet in the new fully—liminal period, most uncertain, requires courage to continue

\*\*Note: it does not identify final stage as “success” but rather newfound realization



# SOCIETAL HINGE MOMENTS

- 1918—end of war and flu pandemic—dramatically altered society
- 1929—Great Depression that followed economic collapse
- 1968—social unrest and civil strife, loss of idealism
- 2020—convergence of all three (health, economic, social) to some degree (1918, 1929, and 1968)



# RELIGIOUS HINGE MOMENTS OCCUR ALSO

- 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Century—collapse of Roman Empire, Dark Ages, Monastic tradition kept it alive
- 11<sup>th</sup> Century—East/West Schism
- 16<sup>th</sup> Century—Protestant Reformation (and Catholic Reformation)
- Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century—demise of “Christendom” in Europe and North America
- 2020 & beyond—post-pandemic way of being church—TBD



# BIBLICAL HINGE MOMENTS

- **session 1: The Baptism and Temptation of Christ**  
week of Sept. 19, 2021
- **session 2: Jacob Wrestles with God**  
week of Sept. 26, 2021
- **session 3: The Healing of the Hemorrhaging Woman**  
week of Oct. 3, 2021
- **session 4: Elijah Taken Up to Heaven**  
week of Oct. 10, 2021
- **session 5: The Conversion of Saul**  
week of Oct. 17, 2021
- **session 6: The Women Encounter the Resurrection of Jesus**  
week of Oct. 24, 2021



# CONSIDER THIS: GOD IS NOT ALWAYS PREDICTABLE...

- [The angel of the Lord said to Elijah] “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19)





# CONSIDER THIS...

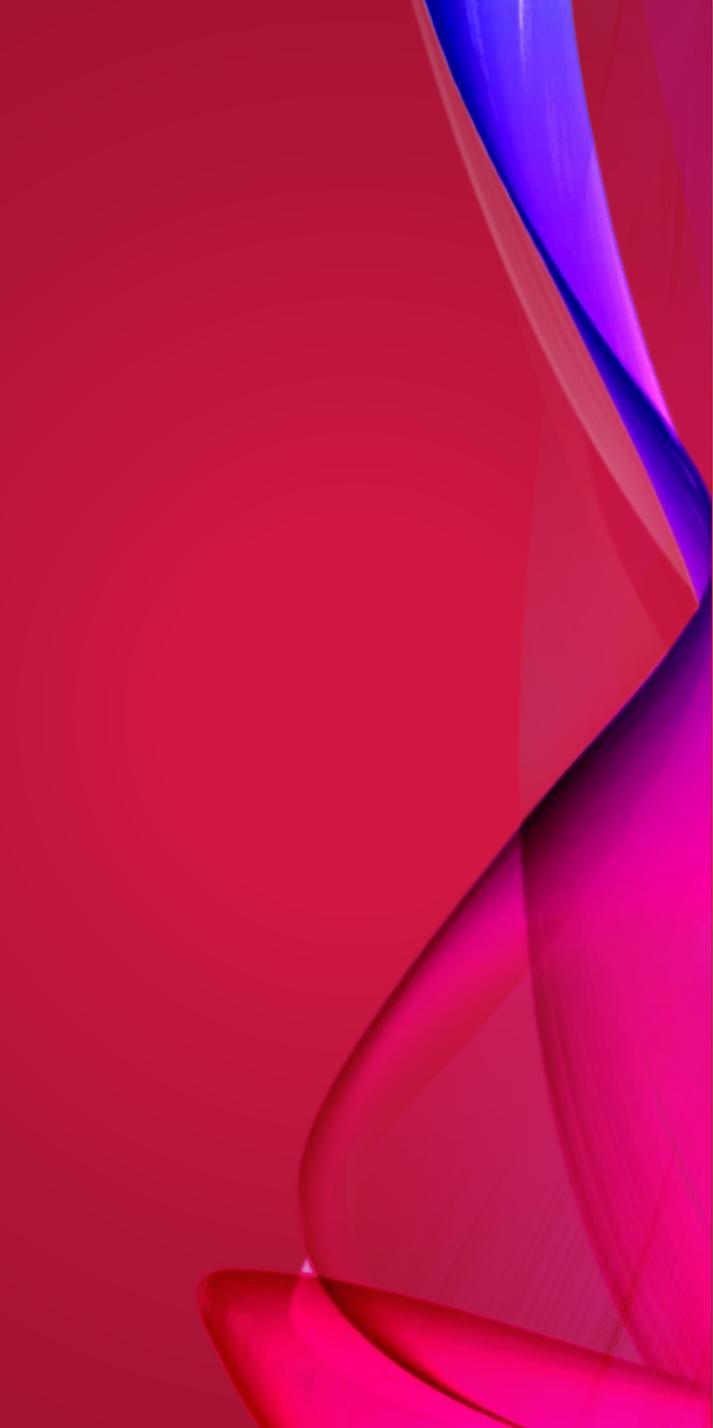
- If we expect or assume the Holy Spirit is at work in things we consider “good,” is there any merit to consider how the Holy Spirit may be at work in things we consider “bad” or unpleasant? For what purpose? And is what we experience as “bad” part of the “disorder” of the change that can lead to transformation and/or conversion?



## BREAKOUT GROUPS

How have you experienced the presence of God during a period of transition?

How did your experience of the divine shift your perspective?



# THREE CHALLENGES AS YOU MAKE A TRANSITION

- The temptation to regard your previous experience as the template for the new (it rarely works!).
- The temptation to assume you can do the new thing better than others have before you—true conversion requires humility (lose your life in order to save it) and vulnerability (I don't have it all figured out and must rely on the Other/other to help find my way).
- Practice joy and gratitude when possible in the new thing, even when it is hard to find things which bring joy or gratitude.

Adapted from an article by Sam Wells

[https://faithandleadership.com/sam-wells-how-transition-leader-three-acts?utm\\_source=albanweekly&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=faithleadership](https://faithandleadership.com/sam-wells-how-transition-leader-three-acts?utm_source=albanweekly&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=faithleadership)



QUESTIONS,  
CONVERSATION,  
CLOSING