



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1780

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2022

At Church on Sundays:

- ♦ 8:30 am in Fellowship Hall
 - ♦ 9:30 am Sanctuary Service
- Also streaming live on Facebook, available on YouTube same afternoon

- ♦ Sunday School
9:30 am—10:30 am
- ♦ Youth Group see inside

Visit us on the Web:

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Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,
Pastor

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

February 14th is Valentine's Day, just in case any of you men need something to panic about. Just a friendly reminder for any procrastinators who might wait till the last moment. Valentine's day reminds me of an article that came out last year about hearts. You know those candy hearts that are bright pink, orange, and yellow, and they have sappy sayings stamped onto them- 'Kiss Me,' 'Hot Stuff,' 'Be Mine,' etc. The original candy hearts with sayings, their official name are "conversation hearts", were the Sweethearts candies from the Necco Co. They were created in the 1860's. By 2019, about eight billion Sweethearts candy hearts were sold each year, with most of those sold in the six weeks leading up to Valentine's Day. Most people fall into three camps when it comes to Valentine's Day. First, there are the folks who shrug it off. Second, just another day of the year. And finally, there are those who roll their eyes at it. They hate the idea of a made-up holiday that promotes romance and shopping. However, it's a shame that we don't celebrate love every day of the year. It's too easy to take our loved ones for granted. No matter which of the three camps you fall into, I hope you take some time every day to notice and appreciate the people who love you. Don't let a day go by without letting someone know that you love them and appreciate them.

I read an article that I thought was especially appropriate for Valentine's Day. There is an organization in the tiny town of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, that is funding a huge Jesus statue in their town. The "Christ the Protector" statue will stand 141 feet tall-16 feet taller than the statue in the capital city. One unique feature of the "Christ the Protector" statue is that there will be a lookout room with wide windows installed at about the height of the Jesus statue's heart. An elevator will transport tourists up to this spot so they can see views of the city below...from Jesus' heart.



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A Reconciling Congregation

(Continued from page 1)

Can you image what the view would be like from Jesus' heart? That's the goals of the Christian life, isn't it? To continually grow in our ability to view life through Jesus' heart. It changes our perspective entirely when we realize that the purpose of our life is not our own fulfillment and happiness. The purpose of our lives is to live as Jesus lived. That means sharing God's love with others. The purpose of our life is to do the good works God created us to do. The purpose of our life is to represent Jesus' character, mission, and message to the world. And you thought buying the right Valentine's present was difficult! And that's why the Bible passage from St. Luke 6: 17-26 is appropriate for Valentine's Day. Because Jesus' teachings come from a place of grace-pure, unmerited, unearned love. Even his toughest teachings, the ones that make us squirm, the ones that offend us, the ones that challenge our worldview-come from a place of love. Jesus' words might seem challenging, even harsh, in this passage. But what if we were to view these words through Jesus' heart? Would that change how we respond to them?



From Home Baking Association

Why did Jesus direct these words specifically toward his disciples? What did he want them -and us-to know? Let me suggest what Jesus was telling them was don't judge your life by your current circumstances. Don't set your heart on the things of this world. That's not what you were made for. You're healthy, wealthy, popular and powerful now? Good for you. But don't base your happiness, self-worth, or security on these things. Or, you are poor, grieving, unpopular or persecuted right now? God be with you. But don't base your attitude and your self-worth on these things. Your circumstances don't define you. Whether your circumstances drive you closer to God or further from God is what's important.

Remember, this is a moment when Jesus' star is rising. Crowds of people follow him wherever he goes. They hang on his every word. They go home and tell their friends and family about him. But Jesus didn't let his popularity go to his head. And he didn't want his disciples to

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*** REMINDER ***



A Red Cross blood drive in memory of Sterling "Lee" Pierce will be held on Saturday, **January 29**. The scheduled hours are 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. Their website says, "This is serious, The Red Cross is experiencing the worst blood shortage in over a decade. The dangerously low blood supply levels have forced some hospitals to defer patients from major surgery, including organ transplants." Donations are desperately needed..." You can schedule an appointment by calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by going to their website at: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/donation-time>

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think that following him was a wonderful way to reap earthly rewards. In fact, the opposite was true. It's so easy to let the good things in life—good health, happy relationships, social acceptance, status symbols—become the foundation for our attitude, our worldview, even our identity. But these pleasures, rather than drawing us closer to God, often drive us further from God.



The other thing Jesus was telling them was God is working in your most painful circumstances. That's the perspective we gain if we view our painful circumstances through Jesus' heart. If we search for what God is teaching us in our circumstances, if we rely on God's power to sustain us in our circumstances, if we open ourselves up to receiving God's mercy in our most painful times as a beggar holds out his hands to receive bread, then we will eventually see God at work in our most painful circumstances.

And the final thing Jesus was telling them was to find their fulfillment in living for him. There are many places in this world you can seek fulfillment. But there is only one place you can truly find it. You were made for eternal life with God, living in a world ruled by God's values, God's priorities. What happens when you live the values and priorities of God's world in this world? Your habits and your lifestyle will look different to your family, your colleagues, and your neighbors.

We can find happiness in chasing success, health, wealth, status, comfort, security. But we will never find our fulfillment or our God-given purpose in those things. God made us to find our fulfillment, our purpose, our life in living for Him. It's not going to be easy. Jesus was noticeably clear about that. So don't set your heart on the things of this world. Set your heart on knowing, doing, and living in God's will, and you will discover the life that God made you for, a life that is both abundant and eternal in its blessing.

Grace, Peace and Love

Pastor Sundar

SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR FEBRUARY

Our worship focus for this February includes the last three Sundays after the Epiphany and February 27, Transfiguration Sunday. It is called "Ordinary" Time because it stands between the two great christological [the branch of theology dealing with the nature, person, and deeds of Jesus Christ] cycles of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany and Lent-Easter-Pentecost.

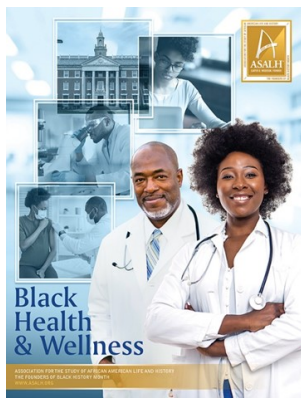
Pastor Sundar will be leading worship each Sunday in February. Every Sunday we have an early worship service at 8:30 am. This service is more informal and lasts about one-half hour. Our regular worship service begins at 9:30 am each Sunday. Be here for an hour of worship that includes our sanctuary choir and other musical groups. The 9:30 am service is also available live-streamed on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FUMCEG. That service will also be available later Sunday afternoons on YouTube at [Worship Service FUMCEG-YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). During the challenges of COVID we have no worship service at Hawthorne Ridge. The first Sunday of the month Holy Communion will be a part of morning worship. We will be looking for you at Sunday worship. Bring a friend.



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The United Methodist calendar for February notes this is Black History Month. Again this year as we have done in the past, we borrow a theme for the month from the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.



"The theme for [Black History Month] 2022 focuses on the importance of **BLACK HEALTH AND WELLNESS**. This theme acknowledges the legacy of not only Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also other ways of knowing (e.g., birthworkers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.) throughout the African Diaspora. The 2022 theme considers activities, rituals and initiatives that Black communities have done to be well.

"In order to foster good health and wellness Black people have embarked on self-determination, mutual aid and social support initiatives to build hospitals, medical and nursing schools (i.e. Meharry Medical College, Howard University College of Medicine, Provident Hospital and Training School, Morehouse School of Medicine, etc.) and community clinics. . . .

"The rise of fields, such as Public and Community Health and Health Informatics have led to a rise in preventive care and a focus on body positivity, physical exercise, nutrition, exploring other dietary options such as veganism and vegetarianism, and gardening. Black Health and Wellness not only includes one's physical body, but also emotional and mental health. . . .

"We are determined to create a platform that shines a light on the multiple facets of Black health and wellness through education and activism. There is much to uncover, amplify, question, and correct."

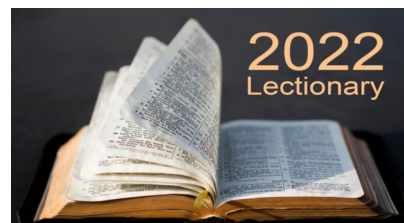
HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY

February 6 Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Isaiah 6:1-8,
Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11

February 13 Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany,
Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20,
Luke 6:17-26

February 20 Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
Genesis 45:3-11, 15, Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40,
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50, Luke 6:27-38

February 27 Transfiguration Sunday Exodus 34:29-35, Psalm 99,
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)



CHOIR DIRECTOR NEEDED



Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is hiring for a new Choir Director effective immediately. If you are interested, send your contact information to Deb Rubenstein at druben@nycap.rr.com or call 518-477-9058.

This is a 5 hour/week position that includes a weekly rehearsal and Sunday's service. A more complete job description can be provided upon request.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Hello Sunday School Families,

It is hard to believe February is already here and Spring is right around the corner. I hope everyone is well and had a wonderful New Year. Sunday School continues to run from 9:30-10:30 during the church service hour. Please see our list of activities for the month below and as always, if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me.

February 6: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Students will be making an age appropriate spiritual road map. Students should go to the classroom first and will attend church at the end for Communion.



February 13: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20. Students will be painting a picture of the Resurrection. Students should go to the Sanctuary first for Young Discipleship.

February 20: Students will be making cards for the homeless shelter love kits. Students should go to the classroom first.

February 27: Lessons TBD. Students should go to the Sanctuary first.

Starting Sunday, **March 6** Communion classes will be resuming. If your student is in 5th grade or up and would like to participate please let me know. Classes will take place during the normal Sunday School time. Classes will start Sunday **March 6** and will end **May 8**. Students will take their first Communion **June 5**. The following weekends there will be no Communion class. Sunday School will still take place.

No communion class on the following Sunday's: **March 20; April 10** (Palm Sunday); **April 17** (Easter Sunday); **April 24** (School vacation)

God Bless,
Amanda M. Trainor

EGChristianEdFUMC@gmail.com

LET'S GO BOWLING - DETAILS

On Saturday, **February 19, 2022**, Cornerstone Campus Ministry will be hosting their annual "Bowling for Beds" Bowl-A-Thon to raise money for the Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter in Albany. The event will be held at Del Lane, 4 Bethlehem Court in Delmar from 12:30 – 4:30 p.m. and will include 2 games of bowling, shoes, pizza & soda and lots of prizes and other "free-bies" donated by businesses and community organizations. You can choose from an "early" (12:30- 2:00 p.m.) or "late" (2:30 – 4:30 p.m.) session. **COVID PROTOCOL WILL BE IN PLACE: ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE VACCINATED. MASKS ARE REQUIRED FOR EVERYONE!**



Homelessness and the need for additional shelter beds in Albany County continue to be a focus for the Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC). It is our belief that all people, regardless of a person's circumstances and behaviors, have a human right to obtain shelter from deadly weather and dangerous street living. Since 2000 the CACC as sponsor and First Lutheran Church of Albany as host have responded to this crisis by providing an Emergency Overflow Shelter with professionally trained staff, operating through the cold weather months, 7 days a week, 12 hours each day.

With the name(s) of participants, the session - 1 or 2, and your contact information in hand, you can signup by contacting Rev. Sandy Damhof, Protestant Campus Ministry at the Interfaith Center, University at Albany – CC346, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222, Email: sdamhof@albany.edu Phone: 518-442-5591 to get on the list.

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Youth February Activities, it feels like 2022 is already going by so fast.

The youth group is collecting Love Kit items until **February 20**. If you would like to donate any of the following items please bring them to church and place them in the bin in the lobby.

Love Kits Items:	Hand Sanitizer	Shampoo & Conditioner	Body Wash / Bar of Soap
	Make up	Tooth Brushes	Tooth Paste
	Hair Brushes	Hair Ties	Deodorant
	Razors	Shaving Cream	Lotions
	Face Wash	Socks	Underwear
	Wash Cloths	Candy treats (no nuts)	Hand warmers
	Hats/Gloves	Thermal underwear	

Senior Youth Group (6th -12th Grade)

February 6: Youth Group will meet from 10:45 am - 12:45 pm, we will be having a light snack, talking about the Golden Rule, talking about upcoming youth mission ideas/ projects and of course playing games.

February 11: Game Night 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm - Come play games and hang out.

February 20: 10:45 am - 12:45 pm - We will be packing the love kit supplies, talking about being in the present, and of course playing games. There will be a light snack to enjoy.

Junior Youth Group (3rd -5th Grade)

February 13: 10:45 am -12:30 pm - We will be talking about the Golden Rule, Playing Valentines BINGO, & enjoying a light snack.

All eating will be done in the Fellowship Hall or one of the bigger rooms where social distancing can be done, with the air circulation. Youth do not have to participate in the snack if they don't want to. Mask wearing is required by all.



UNITED METHODIST HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The United Methodist Higher Education Foundation has **more than \$2 million in scholarships available**. The Foundation is accepting scholarship applications for the 2022-23 academic year through **March 1**. United Methodist students are invited to apply for funds available to help pay for attending colleges, universities or seminaries related to The United Methodist Church. Go to <https://www.umhef.org/> for



more information and an application.

SENIOR LUNCH—CANCELLATION

The Membership Committee met and since the COVID and variant virus infection rates were continuing to climb, it was felt that for the safety of all, especially senior citizens, it would be best to postpone the luncheon until spring.

POSTPONED:-(

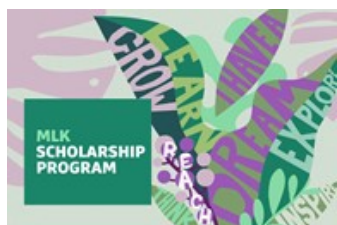
CACC ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

This 2022 Annual Assembly of the Capital Area Council of Churches will meet on **February 8** at 6:00 pm via Zoom. The purpose of the Assembly will be to conduct important business for the Council and present a program highlighting the impact of ecumenism. The latest information on the meeting will be posted on the council website. Go to the council website at <https://www.capareacc.org/> to register for the meeting.



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. SCHOLARSHIPS

The MLK scholarship is available to graduating high school seniors who live, worship, or attend school in Albany or southern Rensselaer County. The scholarship was established in 1973 by the Capital Area Council of Churches to honor the memory of the life and work of Dr. King and to preserve the legacy of the nonviolent human rights movement as it was expressed in his life and teachings. Awards are given without regard to race, creed or gender.



Applicants must be active in their school and faith community and accepted at an accredited college or university for the fall semester. In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and for the ideals of peace and equality for which he devoted his entire life, recipients will be asked to explore in an essay how they exhibit an understanding of and a desire to implement the goals of Dr. King.

For more information, go to the Council website at: <https://www.capareacc.org/> or call the CACC office at 518-462-5450. Important! **Applications are due by March 31, 2021.**

SOME QUESTIONS HEARD AROUND CHURCH THIS MONTH

- ◆ Do members of the "Made By Hand" group do tatting?
- ◆ How have the COVID protocols effected our church worship services?
- ◆ I've seen the line, A Reconciling Congregation on the first page of The Church BELL. What does that mean?

Do you have a question you would like to see answered in The BELL? Email it to editor@fumceg.org and please put "Church Question" on the subject line. Now, here is the answer to one of the questions asked above:



Question: I've seen the line, A Reconciling Congregation on the first page of The Church BELL. What does that mean?

Answer: After a year of meetings and study, our East Greenbush congregation decided to make a statement of acceptance and support for persons of the LGBTQ community. Within the United Methodist Church, individuals, groups and congregations, who are accepting and supporting, have joined together to form the *Reconciling Ministries*. Like minded people in other faith communities have also formed similar groups, such as the *Room For All* in the Reformed Church in America or the Baptists, *Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists*. That is a short answer, I'll have more next month... g.e.h.

OUR CHURCH COMMITTEES AND WHAT THEY DO — PART 2

(Part 3 to follow in the March BELL and Part 4 in the April BELL)

One piece in the January issue of The Church BELL began with the lines:

"The next couple of issues of The BELL will contain detailed descriptions of ways you can help our church by volunteering to serve on various committees, teams, or ministries. *'The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.'*"

That issue talked about the role and the who of the Church Council. There was note of three vacancies on the Council. Since then, two have been filled: Laura Clark is our Lay Member of Annual Conference and David Haase is our Worship Ministry Coordinator. The Finance Committee Chairperson position remains vacant.

This month we continue highlighting *the roles* and *the who's*.

THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees are an elected group of nine individuals, a third of which stands for election at each Church/Charge Conference. At least two thirds shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church. They are charged with overseeing, maintaining and supervising all the Church's property and assets. This includes the Church itself, bequests received by the Church and, in conjunction with the Endowment and Parsonage Committees, those respective assets. We oversee the use of the facilities by groups from both within the Church and those community organizations who call FUMC home. The Trustees arrange for and evaluate the property and liability insurance maintained by and for the Church. Finally the Trustees and their officers are the legal entity representing the Church in conducting business affairs related to our buildings and property. Should you have questions please feel free to contact John Peterson through the Church Office (518-477-9693). We are always looking for volunteers to assist in the maintenance of the Church and its grounds and gardens.

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMISSION (SPRC)

Chair: Deb Rubenstein druben@nycap.rr.com 518-477-9058/518-928-0039

Meeting time: 4th Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

SPRC is the commission within the First United Methodist Church that oversees, hires and advises the employees of our church. We are a group of 10 individuals that serve on the Commission and also function as a 1:1 liaison to each of the staff members. We are responsible for recommending salaries for all staff members to the Finance Committee and Church Council. The chairperson from this commission also serves on Finance and Church Council which meet monthly. We are responsible for the Safe Sanctuary policy being adhered to and background screenings completed for all staff and volunteers. All discussions at SPRC are considered to be confidential due to the nature of our work.

STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Stewardship and Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the church's finances and coordinating the fall Stewardship campaign. The committee also compiles the budget annually, and monitors income and spending to ensure the church is financially sound. The meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. There are vacancies on this committee, including the chair. If you are interested in serving on this committee, contact the Pastor.

Are you interested in serving with one of these groups?

NEWS FROM THE ECO-TEAM

JOSEPH'S HOUSE HOMELESS OUTREACH VAN

We are filling Mondays for February and March. If you can sign up to prepare and deliver 17 sandwiches to the shelter for distribution, along with vegetables or potato chips and a dessert, please contact Kevin Conley (email: e.kevin.conley@gmail.com; phone: 518-253-4907). Assistance with delivering lunches to the Joseph's House administrative offices is available, if needed, and you can be reimbursed for purchased food.



CREATIVE CARE SERIES

The Eco-Team will continue with their video and discussion series on **February 27**. In each session, participants view a 12-17 minute TED Talk and follow with discussion. The sessions are held in the choir room and will run from 11:00-11:45 am. If you would like to participate via ZOOM, please send a request to e.kevin.conley@gmail.com and he will send you a link. This series is intended to inform, but just as importantly, encourage us to talk to one another about the climate emergency that we are in and learn what actions we can take to protect and heal the earth. Topics for the remaining are shown below. Participants can attend one or all of the series.

February 27: How to transform apocalypse fatigue into action on global warming by Espen Stocknas (15 min)

March 27: The economic injustice of plastic by Van Jones (13 min)

April 24: Climate change will displace millions. Here's how we prepare by Collette Pinchon Battle (13 min)

May 22: The most important thing you can do to fight climate change: talk about it by Katherine Hayhoe (17 min)

June 19: How to disagree productively and find common ground by Julia Dhar (15 min)



RECYCLING



In the last few months, we recycled a box of prescription bottles, a few boxes of clear glass, a box of batteries and a small truckload of Styrofoam. The next recycling date for Styrofoam is **April 24**, the Sunday of Earth week. Finally, check out Recycling Places, a web site maintained by the Eco-Team that lists recycling resources for items from athletic shoes to tools. A link to the site can be found on the Eco-Team tab of our church web site (<http://www.fumceg.org/>).

NEWS FROM CORNERSTONE MINISTRY

Sandy Damhof is back home and recovering from her fall while on the semester break mission trip to Louisiana. She is looking for people to sign up to provide supper to students for a Food and Faith meal taking place on Tuesday evenings. If you would like to help provide dinner for about 20 students, please call the church office and leave a message for Mary McIntosh or Kathy Van Buren.



MADE BY HAND



The next get together for the knitting, crocheting *and more* group will be on February 8 and 22. Then again on March 8 and 22. See you then.

Aleta Schweigert

IMPORTANT DATES FROM UPPER NEW YORK CONFERENCE

The Conference has published the following important dates. As the COVID pandemic makes it difficult to know how the future will unfold, the **dates related to Annual Conference are tentative** and updates will be announced should there be any changes.

March 1 -- Deadline for submission of petitions and resolutions (from individuals, churches and unofficial bodies of UNY). In the United Methodist tradition, even individuals are able to submit petitions and resolutions to change The United Methodist Book of Discipline and/or to set a direction on Social Issues for the church. For more information on how to make such a request, see the Pastor or contact George Herrick.



Late March -- Annual Conference registration opens.

June 2-4 -- Currently, the plan for the Upper New York (UNY) 2022 Annual Conference is an in-person event on June 2-4 at the SRC Arena at Onondaga Community College. The theme will be ***It is Well – Keeping Hope Alive***. We acknowledge all that we have faced in the last two years, and through it all, we are well, and God's hope is alive.

THIS FROM THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN FEBRUARY

In the early part of the last century, across ethnic divisions and denominations, Christians and people of other faiths along with secular and labor groups across America rose together to



oppose child labor, unsafe working conditions, and economic inequality----- some of the worst sins of the First Gilded Age. As we once again work to build a more just society in our time, please join the New York State Council of Churches for a **virtual Ecumenical**

and Interfaith Advocacy Day of learning and action, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on **February 16**.

Participants will begin with theological and historical grounding and opportunities to reflect on anti-racism followed by a presentation on organizing to address systemic racial and economic inequality in the state budget. We will then offer pointers on speaking with legislators and help you arrange visits with Assembly people and Senators in your area.

We will then hold seminars on the following issue areas:

Economic Development and Hard and Soft Infrastructure, Health Care, Affordable Housing and Homelessness, Environmental Justice, Labor and Immigration, Criminal Justice Reform, Democracy, Government Ethics and Voting Rights. **Go to the NYS Council of Churches at <https://www.nyscoc.org/>, scroll down to "events and actions" and click on "details" to get involved.**



Raphael, **"The Transfiguration,"** c.1518